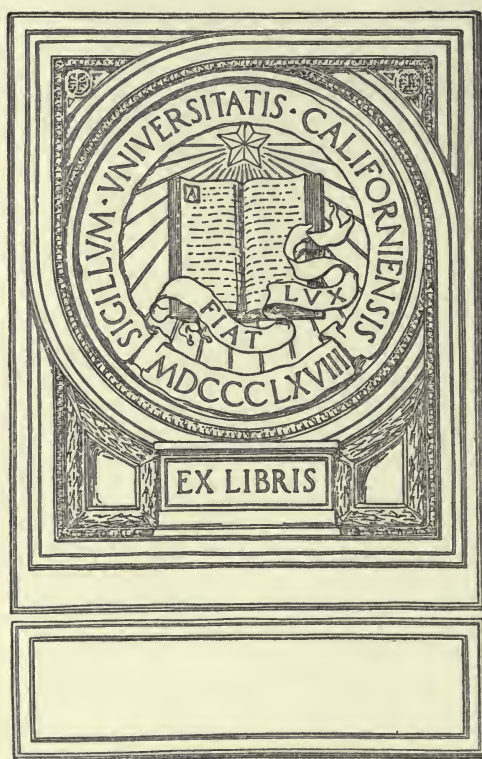


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THE DRAMA  
OF  
THE FORESTS







*A strange apparition was seen crossing the lake. It appeared to have wings, but it did not fly; and though it possessed a tail, it did not run, but contented itself with moving steadily forward on its long up-turned feet. Over an arm it carried what might have been a trident, and what with its waving tail and great outspreading wings that rose above its horned-like head, it suggested . . .*

*See Chapter VI*

# THE DRAMA OF THE FORESTS

*Romance and Adventure*

BY  
ARTHUR HEMING



ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR  
WITH REPRODUCTIONS FROM A  
SERIES OF HIS PAINTINGS OWNED  
BY THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

GARDEN CITY, N. Y., AND TORONTO  
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*First Edition*

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TO  
MR. AND MRS. DAVID A. DUNLAP  
WITH WHOM I SPENT MANY HAPPY SEASONS  
IN THE GREAT NORTHERN FOREST

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## INTRODUCTION

It was in childhood that the primitive spirit first came whispering to me. It was then that I had my first day-dreams of the Northland—of its forests, its rivers and lakes, its hunters and trappers and traders, its fur-runners and mounted police, its voyageurs and packeteers, its missionaries and Indians and prospectors, its animals, its birds and its fishes, its trees and its flowers, and its seasons.

Even in childhood I was for ever wondering . . . what is daily going on in the Great Northern Forest? . . . not just this week, this month, or this season, but what is actually occurring day by day, throughout the cycle of an entire year? It was that thought that fascinated me, and when I grew into boyhood, I began delving into books of northern travel, but I did not find the answer there. With the years this ever-present wonder grew, until it so possessed me that at last it spirited me away from the city, while I was still in my teens, and led me along a path of ever-changing and ever-increasing pleasure, showing me the world, not as men had mauled and marred it, but as the Master of Life had made it, in all its original beauty and splendour. Nor was this all. It led me to observe and ponder over the daily pages of the most profound and yet the most fascinating book that man has ever tried to read; and though, it seemed to me, my feeble attempts to decipher its text were always futile, it has, nevertheless, not only taught me to love Nature with an ever-increasing passion, but it has inspired in me an infinite homage toward the Almighty; for, as Emerson says: "In the woods we return to reason and faith. Then I feel that nothing can befall me in life—no dis-

grace, no calamity (leaving me my eyes)—which Nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground—my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space—all mean egoism vanishes. . . . I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty.”

So, to make my life-dream come true, to contemplate in all its thrilling action and undying splendour the drama of the forests, I travelled twenty-three times through various parts of the vast northern woods, between Maine and Alaska, and covered thousands upon thousands of miles by canoe, pack-train, snowshoes, *bateau*, dog-train, buck-board, timber-raft, prairie-schooner, lumber-wagon, and “alligator.” No one trip ever satisfied me, or afforded me the knowledge or the experience I sought, for traversing a single section of the forest was not unlike making one’s way along a single street of a metropolis and then trying to persuade oneself that one knew all about the city’s life. So back again I went at all seasons of the year to encamp in that great timber-land that sweeps from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Thus it has taken me thirty-three years to gather the information this volume contains, and my only hope in writing it is that perhaps others may have had the same day-dream, and that in this book they may find a reliable and satisfactory answer to all their wonderings. But making my dream come true—what delight it gave me! What sport and travel it afforded me! What toil and sweat it caused me! What food and rest it brought me! What charming places it led me through! What interesting people it ranged beside me! What romance it unfolded before me! and into what thrilling adventures it plunged me!

But before we paddle down the winding wilderness aisle toward the great stage upon which Diana and all her attendant huntsmen and forest creatures may appear, I wish to explain that in compliance with the wishes of the leading actors—who actually lived their parts of this story—fictitious names

have been given to the principal characters and to the principal trading posts, lakes, and rivers herein depicted. Furthermore, in order to give the reader a more interesting, complete, and faithful description of the daily and the yearly life of the forest dwellers as I have observed it, I have taken the liberty of weaving together the more interesting facts I have gathered—both first- and second-hand—into one continuous narrative as though it all happened in a single year. And in order to retain all the primitive local colour, the unique costumes, and the fascinating romance of the fur-trade days as I witnessed them in my twenties—though much of the life has already passed away—the scene is set to represent a certain year in the early nineties.

ARTHUR HEMING.





# THE DRAMA OF THE FORESTS

## I

### ROMANCE AND ADVENTURE

#### HER FATHER THE FREE TRADER

IT WAS September 9, 189-. From sunrise to sunset through mist, sunshine, shower, and shadow we travelled, and the nearer we drew to our first destination, the wilder the country became, the more water-fowl we saw, and the more the river banks were marked with traces of big game. Here signs told us that three caribou had crossed the stream, there muddy water was still trickling into the hoofprint of a moose, and yonder a bear had been fishing. Finally, the day of our arrival dawned, and as I paddled, I spent much of the time dreaming of the adventure before me. As our beautiful birchen craft still sped on her way, the handsome bow parted the shimmering waters, and a passing breeze sent little running waves gurgling along her sides, while the splendour of the autumn sun was reflected on a far-reaching row of dazzling ripples that danced upon the water, making our voyageurs lower their eyes and the trader doze again. There was no other sign of life except an eagle soaring in and out among the fleecy clouds slowly passing overhead. All around was a panorama of enchanting forest.

My travelling companion was a "Free Trader," whose name was Spear—a tall, stoop-shouldered man with heavy eyebrows and shaggy, drooping moustache. The way we met was amusing. It happened in a certain frontier town. His first

question was as to whether I was single. His second, as to whether my time was my own. Then he slowly looked me over from head to foot. He seemed to be measuring my stature and strength and to be noting the colour of my eyes and hair.

Narrowing his vision, he scrutinized me more carefully than before, for now he seemed to be reading my character—if not my soul. Then, smiling, he blurted out:

“Come, be my guest for a couple of weeks. Will you?”

I laughed.

He frowned. But on realizing that my mirth was caused only by surprise, he smiled again and let flow a vivid description of a place he called Spearhead. It was the home of the northern fur trade. It was the centre of a great timber region. It was the heart of a vast fertile belt that was rapidly becoming the greatest of all farming districts. It was built on the fountain head of gigantic water power. It virtually stood over the very vault that contained the richest veins of mineral to be found in the whole Dominion—at least that’s what he said—and he also assured me that the Government had realized it, too, for was it not going to hew a provincial highway clean through the forest to Spearhead? Was it not going to build a fleet of steamers to ply upon the lakes and rivers in that section? And was it not going to build a line of railroad to the town itself in order to connect it with the new transcontinental and thus put it in communication with the great commercial centres of the East and the West? In fact, he also impressed upon me that Spearhead was a town created for young men who were not averse to becoming wealthy in whatever line of business they might choose. It seemed that great riches were already there and had but to be lifted. Would I go?

But when I explained that although I was single, and quite free, I was not a business man, he became crestfallen, but presently revived enough to exclaim:



"Well, what the dickens are you?"

"An artist," I replied.

"Oh, I see! Well . . . we need an artist very badly. You'll have the field all to yourself in Spearhead. Besides, your pictures of the fur trade and of pioneer life would eventually become historical and bring you no end of wealth. You had better come. Better decide right away, or some other artist chap will get ahead of you."

But when I further explained that I was going to spend the winter in the wilderness, that I had already written to the Hudson's Bay Factor at Fort Consolation and that he was expecting me, Spear gloated:

"Bully boy!" and slapping me on the shoulder, he chuckled: "Why, my town is just across the lake from Fort Consolation. A mere five-mile paddle, old chap, and remember, I extend to you the freedom of Spearhead in the name of its future mayor. And, man alive, I'm leaving for there to-morrow morning in a big four-fathom birch bark, with four Indian canoe-men. Be my guest. It won't cost you a farthing, and we'll make the trip together."

I gladly accepted. The next morning we started. Free Trader Spear was a character, and I afterward learned that he was an Oxford University man, who, having been "ploughed," left for Canada, entered the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, and had finally been moved to Fort Consolation where he served seven years, learned the fur-trade business, and resigned to become a "free trader" as all fur traders are called who carry on business in opposition to "The Great Company." We were eight days upon the trip, but, strange to say, during each day's travel toward Spearhead, his conversation in reference to that thriving town made it appear to grow smaller and smaller, until at last it actually dwindled down to such a point, that, about sunset on the day we were to arrive, he turned to me and casually remarked:

"Presently you'll see Fort Consolation and the Indian village beyond. Spearhead is just across the lake, and by the bye, my boy, I forgot to tell you that Spearhead is just my log shack. But it's a nice little place, and you'll like it when you pay us a visit, for I want you to meet my wife."

Then our canoe passed a jutting point of land and in a moment the scene was changed—we were no longer on a river, but were now upon a lake, and the wilderness seemed suddenly left behind.

#### AT FORT CONSOLATION

On the outer end of a distant point a cluster of poplars shaded a small, clapboarded log house. There, in charge of Fort Consolation, lived the Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company. Beyond a little lawn enclosed by a picket fence stood the large storehouse. The lower floor of this was used as a trading room; the upper story served for a fur loft. Behind were seen a number of shanties, then another large building in which dog-sleds and great birch-bark canoes were stored. Farther away was a long open shed, under which those big canoes were built, then a few small huts where the half-breeds lived. With the exception of the Factor's house, all the buildings were of rough-hewn logs plastered with clay. Around the sweeping bend of the bay was a village of tepees in which the Indian fur hunters and their families spend their midsummer. Crowning a knoll in the rear stood a quaint little church with a small tin spire glistening in the sun, and capped by a cross that spread its tiny arms to heaven. On the hill in the background the time-worn pines swayed their shaggy heads and softly whispered to that, the first gentle touch of civilization in the wilderness.

Presently, at irregular intervals, guns were discharged along the shore, beginning at the point nearest the canoe and running round the curve of the bay to the Indian camp, where a brisk fusillade took place. A moment later the Hudson's Bay Com-

pany's flag fluttered over Fort Consolation. Plainly, the arrival of our canoe was causing excitement at the Post. Trader Spear laughed aloud:

"That's one on old Mackenzie. He's taking my canoe for that of the Hudson's Bay Inspector. He's generally due about this time."

From all directions men, women, and children were swarming toward the landing, and when our canoe arrived there must have been fully four hundred Indians present. The first to greet us was Factor Mackenzie—a gruff, bearded Scotsman with a clean-shaven upper lip, gray hair, and piercing gray eyes. When we entered the Factor's house we found it to be a typical wilderness home of an officer of the Hudson's Bay Company; and, therefore, as far unlike the interiors of fur-traders' houses as shown upon the stage, movie screen, or in magazine illustration, as it is possible to imagine. Upon the walls we saw neither mounted heads nor skins of wild animals; nor were fur robes spread upon the floors, as one would expect to find after reading the average story of Hudson's Bay life. On the contrary, the well-scrubbed floors were perfectly bare, and the walls were papered from top to bottom with countless illustrations cut from the *London Graphic* and the *Illustrated London News*. The pictures not only took the place of wall paper, making the house more nearly wind-proof, but also afforded endless amusement to those who had to spend therein the long winter months. The house was furnished sparingly with simple, home-made furniture that had more the appearance of utility than of beauty.

At supper time we sat down with Mrs. Mackenzie, the Factor's half-breed wife, who took the head of the table. After the meal we gathered in the living room before an open fire, over the mantelpiece of which there were no guns, no powder horns, nor even a pair of snowshoes; for a fur trader would no more think of hanging his snowshoes there than a city dweller



would think of hanging his overshoes over his drawing-room mantel. Upon the mantel shelf, however, stood a few unframed family photographs and some books, while above hung a rustic picture frame, the only frame to be seen in the room; it contained the motto, worked in coloured yarns: "God Bless Our Home." When pipes were lighted and we had drawn closer to the fire, the Factor occupied a quaint, home-made, rough-hewn affair known as the "Factor's chair." On the under side of the seat were inscribed the signatures and dates of accession to that throne of all the factors who had reigned at the Post during the past eighty-seven years.

#### A MIGHTY HUNTER

After the two traders had finished "talking musquash"—fur-trade business—they began reminiscing on the more picturesque side of their work, and as I had come to spend the winter with the fur hunters on their hunting grounds, the subject naturally turned to that well-worn topic, the famous Nimrods of the North. It brought forth many an interesting tale, for both my companions were well versed in such lore, and in order to keep up my end I quoted from Warren's book on the Ojibways: "As an illustration of the kind and abundance of animals which then covered the country, it is stated that an Ojibway hunter named No-Ka, the grandfather of Chief White Fisher, killed in one day's hunt, starting from the mouth of Crow Wing River, sixteen elk, four buffalo, five deer, three bear, one lynx, and one porcupine. There was a trader wintering at the time at Crow Wing, and for his winter's supply of meat, No-Ka presented him with the fruits of his day's hunt."

My host granted that that was the biggest day's bag he had ever heard of, and Trader Spear, withdrawing his pipe from his mouth, remarked:

"No-Ka must have been a great hunter. I would like to have had his trade. But, nevertheless, I have heard of an Indian who might have been a match for him. He, too, was an Ojibway, and his name was Narphim. He lived somewhere out in the Peace River country, and I've heard it stated that he killed, in his lifetime, more than eighty thousand living things. Some bag for one hunter."

Since Trader Spear made that interesting remark I have had the pleasure of meeting a factor of the Hudson's Bay Company who knew Narphim from boyhood, and who was a personal friend of his, and who was actually in charge of a number of posts at which the Indian traded. Owing to their friendship for one another, the Factor took such a personal pride in the fame the hunter won, that he compiled, from the books of the Hudson's Bay Company, a complete record of all the fur-bearing animals the Indian killed between the time he began to trade as a hunter at the age of eleven, until his hunting days were ended. Furthermore, in discussing the subject with Narphim they together compiled an approximate list of the number of fish, wild fowl, and rabbits that the hunter must have secured each season, and thus Narphim's record stands as the following figures show. I would tell you the Factor's name but as he has written to me: "For many cogent reasons it is desirable that my name be not mentioned officially in your book," I must refrain. I shall, however, give you the history of Narphim in the Factor's own words:

"Narphim's proper name remains unknown as he was one of two children saved when a band of Ojibways were drowned in crossing a large lake that lies S. E. of Cat Lake and Island Lake, and S. E. of Norway House. He was called Narphim—Saved from the Waters. The other child that was rescued was a girl and she was called Neseemis—Our Little Sister. At first Narphim was adopted and lived with a Swampy Cree chief, the celebrated Keteche-ka-paness, who

was a great medicine man. When Narphim grew to be eleven years old he became a hunter, and first traded his catch at Island Lake; then as the years went by, at Oxford House; then at Norway House, then at Fort Chepewyan, and then at Fort McMurray. After that he went to Lesser Slave Lake, then on to the Peace River at Dunvegan, then he showed up at Fort St. John, next at Battle River, and finally at Vermilion.

"The following is a list of the number of creatures Narphim killed, but of course he also killed a good deal of game that was never recorded in the Company's books, especially those animals whose skins were used for the clothing of the hunter's family.

"Bears 585, beaver 1,080, ermines 130, fishers 195, red foxes 362, cross foxes 78, silver and black foxes 6, lynxes 418, martens 1,078, minks 384, muskrats 900, porcupines 19, otters 194, wolves 112, wolverines 24, wood buffaloes 99, moose 396, caribou 196, jumping deer 72, wapiti 156, mountain sheep 60, mountain goats 29; and rabbits, approximately 8,000, wild fowl, approximately 23,800, and fish approximately 36,000. Total 74,573.

"Yes, Narphim was a great hunter and a good man," says the Factor in his last letter to me. "He was a fine, active, well-built Indian and a reliable and pleasant companion. In fact, he was one of Nature's gentlemen, whom we shall be, and well may be, proud to meet in the Great Beyond, known as the Happy Hunting Grounds."

Thus the evening drifted by. While the names of several of the best hunters had been mentioned as suitable men for me to accompany on their hunting trail, it was suggested that as the men themselves would probably visit the Post in the morning, I should have a chat with them before making my selection. Both Mackenzie and Spear, however, seemed much in favour of my going with an Indian called Oo-koo-hoo.



Presently the clock struck ten and we turned in, the Free Trader sharing a big feather bed with me.

#### THEIR SUMMER LIFE

After breakfast next morning I strolled about the picturesque point. It was a windless, hazy day. An early frost had already clothed a number of the trees with their gorgeous autumnal mantles, the forerunners of Indian summer, the most glorious season of the Northern year.

When I turned down toward the wharf, I found a score of Indians and half-breed trippers unloading freight from a couple of six-fathom birch-bark canoes. Eager men and boys were good-naturedly loading themselves with packs and hurrying away with them to the storehouse, while others were lounging around or applauding the carriers with the heaviest loads. As the packers hurried by, Delaronde, the jovial, swarthy-faced, French-Canadian clerk, note-book in hand, checked the number of pieces. Over by the log huts a group of Indian women were sitting in the shade, talking to Delaronde's Indian wife. All about, and in and out of the Indian lodges, dirty, half-naked children romped together, and savage dogs prowled around seeking what they might devour. The deerskin or canvas covers of most of the tepees were raised a few feet to allow the breeze to pass under. Small groups of women and children squatted or reclined in the shade, smoking and chatting the hours away. Here and there women were cleaning fish, mending nets, weaving mats, making clothes, or standing over steaming kettles. Many of the men had joined the "goods brigade," and their return was hourly expected. Many canoes were resting upon the sandy beach, and many more were lying bottom up beneath the shade of trees.

The most important work undertaken by the Indians during the summer is canoe building. As some of the men are more

expert at this than others, it often happens that the bulk of the work is done by a few who engage in it as a matter of business. Birch bark for canoe building is taken from the tree early in May. The chosen section, which may run from four to eight feet in length, is first cut at the top and bottom; then a two-inch strip is removed from top to bottom in order to make room for working a chisel-shaped wooden wedge—about two feet long—with which the bark is taken off. Where knots appear great care is exercised that the bark be not torn. To make it easier to pack, the sheet of bark is then rolled up the narrow way, and tied with willow. In this shape, it is transported to the summer camping grounds. Canoes range in size all the way from twelve feet to thirty-six feet in length. The smaller size, being more easily portaged, is used by hunters, and is known as a two-fathom canoe. For family use canoes are usually from two and a half to three and a half fathoms long. Canoes of the largest size, thirty-six feet, are called six-fathom or “North” canoes. With a crew of from eight to twelve, they have a carrying capacity of from three to four tons, and are used by the traders for transporting furs and supplies.

Some Indians engage in “voyaging” or “tripping” for the traders—taking out fur packs to the steamboats or railroads, by six-fathom canoe, York boat, or sturgeon-head scow brigades, and bringing in supplies. Others put in part of their time on an occasional hunt for moose or caribou, or in shooting wild fowl. On their return they potter around camp making paddles or snowshoe frames; or they give themselves up to gambling—a vice to which they are rather prone. Sometimes twenty men or more, divided into equal sides, will sit in the form of an oval, with their hair drawn over their faces that their expression may not easily be read, and with their knees covered with blankets. Leaders are chosen on either side, and each team is supplied with twelve small sticks. The game begins by one of the leaders placing his closed hands upon his

blanket, and calling upon the other to match him. If the latter is holding his stick in the wrong hand, he loses; and so the game goes on. Two sets of drummers are playing continuously and all the while there is much chanting. In this simple wise they gamble away their belongings, even to their clothing, and, sometimes, their wives. When the wives are at stake, however, they have the privilege of taking a hand in the game.

The women, in addition to their regular routine of summer camp duties, occupy themselves with fishing, moccasin making, and berry picking. The girls join their mothers in picking berries, which are plentiful and of great variety—raspberries, strawberries, cranberries, blueberries, gooseberries, swampberries, saskatoonberries, pembinaberries, pheasantberries, bearberries, and snakeberries. They gather also wild celery, the roots of rushes, and the inner bark of the poplar—all which they eat raw. In some parts, too, they gather wild rice. Before their summer holidays are over, they have usually secured a fair stock of dried berries, smoked meats and bladders and casings filled with fish oil or other soft grease, to help out their bill of fare during the winter. The women devote most of their spare moments to bead, hair, porcupine, or silk work which they use for the decoration of their clothing. They make *mos-quit-moots*, or hunting bags, of plaited *babiche*, or deerskin thongs, for the use of the men. The girl's first lesson in sewing is always upon the coarsest work; such as joining skins together for lodge coverings. The threads used are made from the sinews of the deer or the wolf. These sinews are first hung outside to dry a little, and are then split into the finest threads. The thread-maker passes each strand through her mouth to moisten it, then places it upon her bare thigh, and with a quick movement rolls it with the flat of her hand to twist it. Passing it again through her mouth, she ties a knot at one end, points the other, and puts it away to dry. The result is a thread like the finest hair-wire.



For colouring moose hair or porcupine quills for fancy work, the women obtain their dyes in the following ways: From the juice of boiled cranberries they derive a magenta dye. From alder bark, boiled, beaten, and strained, they get a dark, slate-coloured blue which is mixed with rabbits' gall to make it adhere. The juice of bearberries gives them a bright red. From gunpowder and water they obtain a fine black, and from coal tar a stain for work of the coarsest kind. They rely chiefly, however, upon the red, blue, green, and yellow ochres found in many parts of the country. These, when applied to the decoration of canoes, they mix with fish oil; but for general purposes the earths are baked and used in the form of powder.

From scenes such as I have described the summer traveller obtains his impression of the forest Indians. Too often their life and character are judged by such scenes, as if these truly represented their whole existence. In reality, this is but their holiday season which they are spending upon their tribal summer camping ground. It is only upon their hunting grounds that one may fairly study the Indians; so, presently, we shall follow them there. And when one experiences the wild, free life the Indian lives—hampered by no household goods or other property that he cannot at a moment's notice dump into his canoe and carry with him to the ends of the earth if he chooses—one not only envies him, but ceases to wonder which of the two is the greater philosopher—the white man or the red; for the poor old white man is so overwhelmed with absurd conventions and encumbering property that he can rarely do what his heart dictates.

#### FAMILY HUNTING GROUNDS

Don't let us decide just yet, however, whether the Indian derives more pleasure from life than does the white man, at

least, not until we return from our voyage of pleasure and investigation; but before we leave Fort Consolation it is well to know that the hunting grounds in possession of the Indian tribes that live in the Great Northern Forest have been for centuries divided and subdivided and allotted, either by bargain or by battle, to the main families of each band. In many cases the same hunting grounds have remained in the undisputed possession of the same families for generations. Family hunting grounds are usually delimited by natural boundaries, such as hills, valleys, rivers, and lakes. The allotments of land generally take the form of wedge-shaped tracts radiating from common centres. From the intersection of these converging boundary lines the common centres become the hubs of the various districts. These district centres mark convenient summer camping grounds for the reunion of families after their arduous labour during the long winter hunting season. The tribal summer camping grounds, therefore, are not only situated on the natural highways of the country—the principal rivers and lakes—but also indicate excellent fishing stations. There, too, the Indians have their burial grounds.

Often these camping grounds are the summer headquarters for from three to eight main families; and each main family may contain from five or six to fifty or sixty hunting men. Inter-marriage between families of two districts gives the man the right to hunt on the land of his wife's family as long as he "sits on the brush" with her—is wedded to her—but the children do not inherit that right; it dies with the father. An Indian usually lives upon his own land, but makes frequent excursions to the land of his wife's family.

In the past, the side boundaries of hunting grounds have been the cause of many family feuds, and the outer boundaries have furnished the occasion for many tribal wars. The past and the present headquarters camping grounds of the Strong Woods Indians—as the inhabitants of the Great Northern

Forest are generally called—lie about one hundred and fifty miles apart.

The natural overland highways throughout the country, especially those intersecting the watercourses and now used as the roadbeds for our great transcontinental railways, were not originally discovered by man at all. The credit is due to the big game of the wilderness; for the animals were not only the first to find them, but also the first to use them. The Indian simply followed the animals, and the trader followed the Indian, and the official "explorer" followed the trader, and the engineer followed the "explorer," and the railroad contractor followed the engineer. It was the buffalo, the deer, the bear, and the wolf who were our original transcontinental pathfinders, or rather pathmakers. Then, too, the praise bestowed upon the pioneer fur traders for the excellent judgment shown in choosing the sites upon which trading posts have been established throughout Canada, has not been deserved; the credit is really due to the Indians. The fur traders erected their posts or forts upon the tribal camping grounds simply because they found such spots to be the general meeting places of the Indians, and not only situated on the principal highways of the wilderness but accessible from all points of the surrounding country, and, moreover, the very centres of excellent fish and game regions. Thus in Canada many of the ancient tribal camping grounds are now known by the names of trading posts, of progressive frontier towns, or of important cities.

Now, as of old, the forest Indians after their winter's hunt return in the early summer to trade their catch of furs, to meet old friends, and to rest and gossip awhile before the turning leaf warns them to secure their next winter's "advances" from the trader, and once more paddle away to their distant hunting grounds.

The several zones of the Canadian wilderness are locally



known as the Coast Country—the shores of the Arctic Ocean and Hudson Bay; the Barren Grounds—the treeless country between Hudson Bay and the Mackenzie River; the Strong Woods Country—the whole of that enormous belt of heavy timber that spans Canada from east to west; the Border Lands—the tracts of small, scattered timber that lie between the prairies and the northern forests; the Prairie Country; the Mountains; and the Big Lakes. These names have been adopted by the fur traders from the Indians. It is in the Strong Woods Country that most of the fur-bearing animals live.

#### MEETING OO-KOO-HOO

About ten o'clock on the morning after our arrival at Fort Consolation, Free Trader Spear left for home with my promise to paddle over and dine at Spearhead next day.

At noon Factor Mackenzie informed me that he had received word that Oo-koo-hoo—The Owl—was coming to the Fort that afternoon and that, taking everything into consideration, he thought Oo-koo-hoo's hunting party the best for me to join. It consisted, he said, of Oo-koo-hoo and his wife, his daughter, and his son-in-law, Amik—The Beaver—and Amik's five children. The Factor further added that Oo-koo-hoo was not only one of the greatest hunters, and one of the best canoe-men in that district, but in his youth he had been a great traveller, as he had hunted with other Indian tribes, on Hudson Bay, on the Churchill, the Peace, the Athabasca, and the Slave rivers, and even on the far-away Mackenzie; and was a master at the game. His son-in-law, Amik, was his hunting partner. Though Amik would not be home until to-morrow, Oo-koo-hoo and his wife, their daughter and her children were coming that afternoon to get their "advances," as the party contemplated leaving for their hunting grounds on the second day. That I might look them over while they were getting

their supplies in the Indian shop, and if I took a fancy to the old gentleman—who by the way was about sixty years of age—the trader would give me an introduction, and I could then make my arrangements with the hunter himself. So after dinner, when word came that they had landed, I left the living room for the Indian shop.

In the old days, in certain parts of the country, when the Indians came to the posts to get their “advances” or to barter their winter’s catch of fur, the traders had to exercise constant caution to prevent them from looting the establishments. At some of the posts only a few Indians at a time were allowed within the fort, and even then trading was done through a wicket. But that applied only to the Plains Indians and to some of the natives of the Pacific Coast; for the Strong Woods people were remarkably honest. Even to-day this holds good notwithstanding the fact that they are now so much in contact with white men. Nowadays the Indians in any locality rarely cause trouble, and at the trading posts the business of the Indian shops is conducted in a quiet and orderly way.

The traders do most of their bartering with the Indians in the early summer when the hunters return laden with the spoils of their winter’s hunt. In the early autumn, when the Indians are about to leave for their hunting grounds, much business is done, but little in the way of barter. At that season the Indians procure their outfit for the winter. Being usually insolvent, owing to the leisurely time spent upon the tribal camping grounds, they receive the necessary supplies on credit. The amount of credit, or “advances,” given to each Indian seldom exceeds one third of the value of his average annual catch. That is the white man’s way of securing, in advance, the bulk of the Indian’s prospective hunt; yet, although a few of them are sometimes slow in settling their debts, they are never a match for the civilized white man.

When I entered the trading room I saw that it was furnished with a U-shaped counter paralleling three sides of the room, and with a large box-stove in the middle of the intervening space. On the shelves and racks upon the walls and from hooks in the rafters rested or hung a conglomeration of goods to be offered in trade to the natives. There were copper pails and calico dresses, pain-killer bottles and Hudson's Bay blankets, sow-belly and chocolate drops, castor oil and gun worms, frying-pans and ladies' wire bustles, guns and corsets, axes and ribbons, shirts and hunting-knives, perfumes and bear traps. In a way, the Indian shop resembled a department store except that all the departments were jumbled together in a single room. At one post I visited years ago—that of Abitibi—they had a rather progressive addition in the way of a millinery department. It was contained in a large lidless packing case against the side of which stood a long steering paddle for the clerk's use in stirring about the varied assortment of white women's ancient headgear, should a fastidious Indian woman request to see more than the uppermost layer.

Already a number of Indians were being served by the Factor and Delaronde, the clerk, and I had not long to wait before Oo-koo-hoo appeared. I surmised at once who he was, for one could see by the merest glance at his remarkably pleasant yet thoroughly clever face, that he was all his name implied, a wise, dignified old gentleman, who was in the habit of observing much more than he gave tongue to—a rare quality in men—especially white men. Even before I heard him speak I liked Oo-koo-hoo—The Owl.

But before going any farther, I ought to explain that as I am endeavouring to render a faithful description of forest life, I am going to repeat in the next few paragraphs part of what once appeared in one of my fictitious stories of northern life. I then made use of the matter because it was the truth, and for that very reason I am now going to repeat it; also because this



transaction as depicted is typical of what usually happens when the Indians try to secure their advances. Furthermore, I give the dialogue in detail, as perchance some reader may feel as Thoreau did, when he said: "It would be some advantage to live a primitive and frontier life, though in the midst of an outward civilization, if only to learn what are the gross necessities of life and what methods have been taken to obtain them; or even to look over the old day-books of the merchants, to see what it was that men most commonly bought at the stores, what they stored, that is, what are the grossest groceries."

But while the following outfit might be considered the Indian's grossest groceries, the articles are not really necessities at all for him; for, to go to the extreme, a good woodsman can hunt without even gun, axe, knife, or matches, and can live happily, absolutely independent of our civilization.

As the Factor was busy with another Indian when the Chief entered—for Oo-koo-hoo was the chief of the Ojibways of that district—he waited patiently, as he would not deign to do business with a clerk. When he saw the trader free, he greeted:

"*Quay, quay, Hugemow!*" (Good day, Master).

"Gude day, man Oo-koo-hoo, what can I do for ye the day?" amicably responded the Factor.

"Master, it is this way. I am about to leave for my hunting grounds; but this time I am going to spend the winter upon a new part of them, where I have not hunted for years, and where game of all kinds will be plentiful. Therefore, I want you to give me liberal advances so that my hunt will not be hindered."

"Fegs, Oo-koo-hoo, ma freen', yon's an auld, auld farrant. But ye're well kenn'd for a leal, honest man; an' sae, I'se no be unco haird upon ye."

So saying, the Factor made him a present of a couple of pounds of flour, half a pound of pork, half a pound of sugar, a quarter

of a pound of tea, a plug of tobacco, and some matches. The Factor's generosity was prompted largely by his desire to keep the Indian in good humour. After a little friendly chaffing, the Factor promised to give the hunter advances to the extent of one hundred "skins."

A "skin," or, as it is often called, a "made beaver," is equivalent to one dollar in the Hudson Bay and the Mackenzie River districts, but only fifty cents in the region of the Athabasca.

Perhaps it should be explained here that while Oo-koo-hoo could speak broken English, he always preferred to use his own language when addressing the trader, whom he knew to be quite conversant with Ojibway, and so, throughout this book, I have chosen to render the Indian's speech as though it was translated from Ojibway into English, rather than at any time render it in broken English, as the former is not only easier to read, but is more expressive of the natural quality of the Indian's speech. In olden days some of the chiefs who could not speak English at all were, it is claimed, eloquent orators—far outclassing our greatest statesmen.

Oo-koo-hoo, having ascertained the amount of his credit, reckoned that he would use about fifty skins in buying traps and ammunition; the rest he would devote to the purchase of necessities for himself and his party, as his son-in-law had arranged with him to look after his family's wants in his absence. So the old gentleman now asked for the promised skins. He was handed one hundred marked goose quills representing that number of skins. After checking them over in bunches of ten, he entrusted twenty to his eldest grandson, Ne-geek—The Otter—to be held in reserve for ammunition and tobacco, and ten to his eldest granddaughter, Neykia, with which to purchase an outfit for the rest of the party.

For a long time Oo-koo-hoo stood immersed in thought. At last his face brightened. He had reached a decision. For years he had coveted a new muzzle-loading gun, and he felt

that the time had now arrived to get it. So he picked out one valued at forty skins and paid for it. Then, taking back the quills his grandson held, he bought twenty skins' worth of powder, caps, shot, and bullets. Then he selected for himself a couple of pairs of trousers, one pair made of moleskin and the other of tweed, costing ten skins; two shirts and a suit of underwear, ten skins; half a dozen assorted traps, ten skins. Finding that he had used up all his quills, he drew on those set aside for his wife and son-in-law's family and bought tobacco, five skins; files, one skin; an axe, two skins; a knife, one skin; matches, one half skin; and candy for his youngest grandchild, one half skin. On looking over his acquisitions he discovered that he must have at least ten skins' worth of twine for nets and snares, five skins' worth of tea, one skin worth of soap, one skin worth of needles and thread, as well as a tin pail and a new frying pan. After a good deal of haggling, the Factor threw him that number of quills, and Oo-koo-hoo's manifest contentment somewhat relieved the trader's anxiety.

A moment later, however, Oo-koo-hoo was reminded by his wife, Ojistoh, that there was nothing for her, so she determined to interview the Factor herself. She tried to persuade him to give her twenty skins in trade, and promised to pay for them in the spring with rat and ermine skins, or—should those fail her—with her dog, which was worth fully thirty skins. She had been counting on getting some cotton print for a dress, as well as thread and needles, to say nothing of extra tea, which in all would amount to at least thirty-five or forty skins. When, however, the Factor allowed her only ten skins, her disappointment was keen, and she ended by getting a shawl. Then she left the trading room to pay a visit to the Factor's wife, and confide to her the story of her expectations and of her disappointment so movingly that she would get a cup of tea, a word of sympathy, and perhaps even an old petticoat.

In the meantime, Oo-koo-hoo was catching it again. He had





*I surmised at once who he was, for one could see by the merest glance at his remarkably pleasant yet thoroughly clever face, that he was all his name implied, a wise dignified old gentleman, who was in the habit of observing much more than he gave tongue to—a rare quality in men—especially white men. Even before I heard him speak I liked Oo-koo-hoo—The . . . See Chapter I*



forgotten his daughter; so after more haggling the trader agreed to advance her ten skins. Her mind had long been made up. She bought a three-point blanket, a small head shawl, and a piece of cotton print. Then the grandsons crowded round and grumbled because there was nothing for them.

By this time the trader was beginning to feel that he had done pretty well for the family already; but he kept up the appearance of bluff good humour, and asked:

"Well, Oo-koo-hoo, what wad ye be wantin' for the laddies?"

"My grandsons are no bunglers, as you know," said the proud old grandsire. "They can each kill at least twenty skins' worth of fur."

"Aye, aye!" rejoined the trader. "I shall e'en gi'e them twenty atween them."

In the goodness of his heart he offered the boys some advice as to what they should buy: "Ye'll be wantin' to buy traps, I'm jalousin', an' sure ye'll turn oot to be graun' hunters, Nimrods o' the North that men'll mak' sangs aboot i' the comin' years." He cautioned them to choose wisely, because from henceforth they would be personally responsible for everything they bought, and must pay, "skin for skin" (the motto of the Hudson's Bay Company).

The boys listened with gloomy civility, and then purchased an assortment of useless trifles such as ribbons, tobacco, buttons, candy, rings, pomatum, perfume, and Jew's harps.

The Factor's patience was now nearly exhausted. He picked up his account book, and strode to the door, and held it open as a hint to the Indians to leave. But they pretended to take no notice of his action.

The granddaughters, who had been growing more and more anxious lest they should be forgotten, now began to be voluble in complaint. Oo-koo-hoo called the trader aside and explained the trouble. The Factor realized that he was in a corner, and that if he now refused further supplies he would offend the old

chief, and drive him to sell his best furs to the opposition trader in revenge. He surrendered, and the girls received ten skins between them.

At long last everyone was pleased except the unhappy Factor. Gathering his purchases together, Oo-koo-hoo tied up the powder, shot, tea, and sugar in the legs of the trousers; placed the purchases for his wife, daughter, and granddaughters in the shawl, and the rest of the goods in the blanket.

Then he made the discovery that he had neither flour nor grease. He could not start without them. The Factor's blood was now almost at the boiling pitch, but he dared not betray his feelings; for the Indian was ready to take offence at the slightest word, so rich and independent did he feel. Angering him now would simply mean adding to the harvest of the opposition trader. He chewed his lower lip in the effort to smother his disgust, and growled out with an angry grin:

"Hoots, mon, ye ha'e gotten ower muckle already. It's fair redeeklus. I jist canna gi'e ye onythin' mair ava!"

"Ah, but, master, you have forgotten that I am a great hunter. And that my son-in-law is a great hunter, too. This is but the outfit for a lazy man! Besides, the Great Company is rich, and I am poor. If you will be stingy, I shall not trouble you more."

Once again the Factor gave way, and handed out the flour and grease. All filed out, and the Factor turned the key in the door. As he walked toward the house, his spirits began to rise, and he clapped the old Indian on the back good-naturedly. Presently Oo-koo-hoo halted in his tracks. He had forgotten something: he had nothing in case of sickness.

"Master, you know my voyage is long; my work is hard; the winter is severe. I am not very strong now: I may fall ill. My wife—she is not very strong—may fall ill also. My son-in-law is not very strong: he may fall ill too. My daughter is not. . . ."



"De'il ha'e ye!" roared the Factor, "what is't the noo?"

"Never mind, it will do to-morrow," muttered the hunter with an offended air.

"As I'm a leevin' sinner, it's noo or it's nivver," insisted the Factor, who had no desire to let the Indian have another day at it. "Come back this verra minnit, an' I'll gi'e ye a wheen poother's an' sic like, that'll keep ye a' hale and hearty, I houp, till ye win hame again."

The Factor took him back and gave him some salts, peppermint, pain-killer, and sticking-plaster to offset all the ills that might befall him and his party during the next ten months.

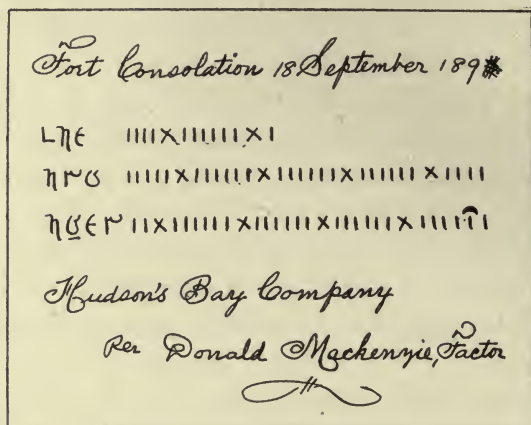
Once more they started for the house. The Factor was ready to put up with anything as long as he could get them away from the store. Oo-koo-hoo now told the trader not to charge anything against his wife as he would settle her account himself, and that as Amik would be back in the morning, he, too, would want his advances, and if they had forgotten anything, Amik could get it next day.

The Factor scowled again, but it was too late.

While the Indians lounged around the kitchen and talked to the Factor's wife and the half-breed servant girl, the Factor went to his office and made out Oo-koo-hoo's bill, which read:

Fort Consolation 18 September 1894  
 D<sup>rs</sup> Advances to  
 Oo-koo-hoo and family  
 xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx 1111 — 164 M.B.  
 Hudson's Bay Company  
 Per Donald Mackenzie, Factor

The Indian now told the trader that he wanted him to send the "Fur Runners" to him with supplies in ten weeks' time; and that he must have a "geese-wark," or measure of days, in order to know exactly when the Fur Runners would arrive at his camp. So the Factor made out the following calendar:



The above characters to the left are syllabic—a method of writing taught to the Indians by the missionaries. They spell the words September, October, and November. The 1's represent week days, and the X's Sundays. The calendar begins with the 18th of September, and the crescent marks the 29th of November, the date of the arrival of the Fur Runners. The Indian would keep track of the days by pricking a pin hole every day above the proper figure.

Presently the Factor and I were alone for a few moments and he growled:

"Whit d'ye think o' the auld de'il?"

"Fine, I'll go with him, if he will take me."

So I had a talk with the old Indian, and when he learned that I had no intention of killing game, but merely wanted to accompany him and his son-in-law on their hunts, he consented and we came to terms. I was to be ready to start early on the



morning of the 20th. Then Oo-koo-hoo turned to the trader and said:

"Master, it is getting late and it will be later when I reach my lodge. I am hungry now, and I shall be hungrier still when I get home. I am growing . . ."

"Aye, aye, ma birkie," interrupted the Factor, "I un'erstaun' fine." He bestowed upon the confident petitioner a further gratuity of flour, tea, sugar, and tallow, a clay pipe, a plug of tobacco and some matches, so as to save him from having to break in upon his winter supplies before he started upon his journey to the hunting grounds. Oo-koo-hoo solemnly expressed his gratitude:

"Master, my heart is pleased. You are my father. I shall now hunt well, and you shall have all my fur."

To show his appreciation of the compliment, the Factor gave him an old shirt, and wished him good luck.

In the meantime, Oo-koo-hoo's wife had succeeded in obtaining from the Factor's wife old clothes for her grandchildren, needles and thread, and some food. Just as they got ready to go, the younger woman, Amik's wife, remembered that the baby had brought a duck as a present for the Factor's children so they had to give a present in return, worth at least twice as much as the duck.

The Factor and his family were by this time sufficiently weary. Right willingly did they go down to the landing to see the Indians off. No sooner had these taken their places in the canoes and paddled a few strokes away than the grandmother remembered that she had a present for the Factor and his wife. All paddled back again, and the Factor and his wife were each presented with a pair of moccasins. No, she would not take anything in return, at least, not just now. To-morrow, perhaps, when they came to say good-bye.

"Losh me! I thoct they were aff an' gane," exclaimed the trader as he turned and strode up the beach.

I inwardly laughed, for any man—red, white, black, or yellow—who could make such a hard-headed old Scotsman as Donald Mackenzie loosen up, was certainly clever; and the way old Oo-koo-hoo made off with such a lot of supplies proved him more than a match for the trader.

#### THE BEST FUR DISTRICTS

While we were at supper a perfect roar of gun shots ran around the bay and on our rushing to the doorway we saw the Inspector's big canoe coming. Up went the flag and more gun shots followed. Then we went down to the landing to meet Inspecting Chief Factor Bell.

After supper the newcomer and the Factor and I sat before the fire and discussed the fur trade. I liked to listen to the old trader, but the Inspector, being the greater traveller of the two, covering every year on the rounds of his regular work thousands upon thousands of miles, was the more interesting talker. Presently, when the subject turned to the distribution of the fur-bearing animals, Mr. Bell took a case from his bag and opening it, spread it out before us upon the Factor's desk. It was a map of the Dominion of Canada, on which the names of the principal posts of the Hudson's Bay Company were printed in red. Across it many irregular lines were drawn in different-coloured inks, and upon its margins were many written notes.

"This map, as you see," remarked the Inspector, "defines approximately the distribution of the fur-bearing animals of Canada, and I'll wager that you have never seen another like it; for if it were not for the records of the Hudson's Bay Company, no such map could have been compiled. How did I manage it? Well, to begin with, you must understand that the Indians invariably trade their winter's catch of fur at the trading post nearest their hunting grounds; so when the

annual returns of all the posts are sent in to the Company's headquarters, those returns accurately define the distribution of the fur-bearing animals for that year. These irregular lines across the map were drawn after an examination of the annual returns from all the posts for the last forty years. Publish it? No, siree, that would never do!"

But the Inspector's remarks did not end the subject, as we began discussing the greatest breeding grounds of the various fur-bearers, and Mr. Bell presently continued:

"The greatest centre for coloured foxes is near Salt River, which flows into Slave River at Fort Smith. There, too, most of the black foxes and silver foxes are trapped. The great otter and fisher centre is around Trout Lake, Island Lake, Sandy Lake, and God's Lake. Otter taken north of Lake Superior are found to be fully one third larger than those killed in any other region. Black bears and brown bears are most frequently to be met with between Fort Pelly and Portage La Loche. Cumberland House is the centre of the greatest breeding grounds for muskrat, mink, and ermine. Manitoba House is another great district for muskrat. Lynxes are found in greatest numbers in the Iroquois Valley, in the foothills on the eastern side of the Rockies. Coyote skins come chiefly from the district between Calgary and Qu'Appelle for a hundred miles both north and south. Skunks are most plentiful just south of Green Lake; formerly, they lived on the plains, but of late they have moved northward into the woods. Wolverines frequent most the timber country just south of the Barren Grounds, where they are often found travelling in bands. The home of the porcupine lies just north of Isle à la Crosse. Forty years ago the breeding grounds of the beaver were on the eastern side of the Rockies. Nowadays that region is hardly worth considering as a trapping ground for them. They have been steadily migrating eastward along the Churchill River, then by way of Cross Lake, Fort Hope, to Abitibi, thence north-



easterly clean across the country to Labrador, where few were to be found twenty-five years ago. Don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying that beaver were not found in those parts years ago, but what I mean is that the source of the greatest harvest of beaver skins has moved steadily eastward during the last forty years. Strange to say, the finest marten skins secured in Canada are not those of the extreme northern limit, but those taken on the Parsnip River in British Columbia."

#### WANTED, A SON-IN-LAW

Next morning I busied myself making a few additions to my outfit for the winter. Then I borrowed a two-and-a-half fathom canoe and paddled across the lake to Spearhead. The town I had heard so much about from the Free Trader was just a little clearing of about three acres on the edge of the forest; in fact, it was really just a stump lot with a small one-and-a-half story log house standing in the middle. Where there was a rise in the field, a small log stable was set half underground, and upon its roof was stacked the winter's supply of hay for a team of horses, a cow, and a heifer.

At the front door Mr. and Mrs. Spear welcomed me. My hostess was a prepossessing Canadian woman of fair education, in fact, she had been a stenographer. On entering the house I found the trading room on the right of a tiny hall, on the left was the living room, which was also used to eat in, and the kitchen was, of course, in the rear. After being entertained for ten or fifteen minutes by my host and hostess, I heard light steps descending the stairs, and the next moment I beheld a charming girl. She was their only child. They called her Athabasca, after the beautiful lake of that name. She was sixteen years of age, tall, slender, and graceful, a brunette with large, soft eyes and long, flowing, wavy hair. She wore a simple little print dress that was becomingly short in the skirt,

a pair of black stockings, and low, beaded moccasins. I admired her appearance, but regretted her shyness, for she was almost as bashful as I was. She bowed and blushed—so did I—and while her parents talked to me she sat demurely silent on the sofa. Occasionally, I caught from her with pleasant embarrassment a shy but fleeting glance.

Presently, dinner was announced by a half-breed maid, and we four took our places at the table, Athabasca opposite me. At first the talk was lively, though only three shared in it. Then, as the third seemed rather more interested in his silent partner, he would from time to time lose the thread of the discourse. By degrees the conversation died down into silence. A few minutes later Mrs. Spear suddenly remarked:

“Father . . . don’t you think it would be a good thing if you took son-in-law into partnership?”

Father leaned back, scratched his head for a while, and then replied:

“Yes, Mother, I do, and I’ll do it.”

The silent though beautiful Athabasca, without even raising her eyes from her plate, blushed violently, and needless to say, I blushed, too, but, of course, only out of sympathy.

“The horses are too busy, just now, to haul the logs, but of course the young people could have our spare room until I could build them a log shack.”

“Father, that’s a capital idea. So there’s no occasion for any delay whatever. Then, when their house is finished, we could spare them a bed, a table, a couple of chairs, and give them a new cooking stove.”

Athabasca blushed deeper than ever, and studied her plate all the harder, and I began to show interest and prick up my ears, for I wondered who on earth son-in-law could be? I knew perfectly well there was no young white man in all that region, and that even if he lived in the nearest frontier town, it would take him, either by canoe or on snowshoes, at least two



weeks to make the round trip to Spearhead, just to call on her. I couldn't fathom it at all.

"Besides, Mother, we might give them the heifer, as a starter, for she will be ready to milk in the spring. Then, too, we might give them a few ducks and geese and perhaps a pig."

"Excellent idea, Father; besides, I think I could spare enough cutlery, dishes, and cooking utensils to help out for a while."

"And I could lend them some blankets from the store," the trader returned.

But at that moment Athabasca miscalculated the distance to her mouth and dropped a bit of potato on the floor, and when she stooped to recover it, I caught a glance from the corner of her eye. It was one of those indescribable glances that girls give. I remember it made me perspire all over. Queer, isn't it, the way women sometimes affect one? I would have blushed more deeply, but by that time there was no possible chance of my face becoming any redder, notwithstanding the fact that I was a red-head. Ponder as I would, I couldn't fathom the mystery . . . who Son-in-law could be . . . though I had already begun to think him a lucky fellow—quite one to be envied.

Then Mrs. Spear exclaimed, as we rose from the table:

"Good! . . . Then that's settled . . . you'll take him into partnership, and I'm glad, for I like him, and I think he'll make an excellent trader."

Our getting away from the table rather relieved me, as I was dripping perspiration, and I wanted to fairly mop my face—of course, when they weren't looking.

Together they showed me over the establishment: the spare bedroom, the trading shop, the stable, the heifer, the ducks and geese, and even the pig—though it puzzled me why they singled out the very one they intended giving Son-in-law. The silent though beautiful Athabasca followed a few feet behind as we went the rounds, and inspected the wealth that was to be

bestowed upon her lover. I was growing more inquisitive than ever as to who Son-in-law might be. Indeed, I felt like asking, but was really too shy, and besides, when I thought it over, I concluded it was none of my business.

When the time came for me to return to the Hudson's Bay Post, I shook hands with them all—Athabasca had nice hands and a good grip, too. Her parents gave me a pressing invitation to visit them again for a few days at New Year's, when everyone in the country would be going to the great winter festival that was always held at Fort Consolation. As I paddled away I mused:

"By George, Son-in-law is certainly a lucky dog, for Athabasca's a peach . . . but I don't see how in thunder her lover ever gets a chance to call."

#### LEAVING FORT CONSOLATION

I was up early next morning and as I wished to see how Oo-koo-hoo and his party would pack up and board their canoes, I walked round the bay to the Indian village. After a hasty breakfast, the women pulled down the lodge coverings of sheets of birch bark and rolling them up placed them upon the *star-chi-gan*—the stage—along with other things which they intended leaving behind. The lodge poles were left standing in readiness for their return next summer, and it wasn't long before all their worldly goods—save their skin tepees and most of their traps, which had been left on their last winter's hunting grounds—were placed aboard their three canoes, and off they paddled to the Post, to say good-bye, while Amik secured his advances.

Just think of it, all you housekeepers—no gold plate or silverware to send to the vault, no bric-à-brac to pack, no furniture to cover, no bedding to put away, no rugs or furs or clothes to send to cold storage, no servants to wrangle with or discharge,

no plumbers to swear over, no janitors to cuss at, no, not even any housecleaning to do before you depart—just move and nothing more. Just dump a little outfit into a canoe and then paddle away from all your tiresome environment, and travel wherever your heart dictates, and then settle down where not even an exasperating neighbour could find you. What would you give to live such a peaceful life?

“As I understand it,” says Thoreau, “that was a valid objection urged by Momus against the house which Minerva made, that she had not made it movable, by which means a bad neighbourhood might be avoided; and it may still be urged, for our houses are such unwieldy property that we are often imprisoned rather than housed in them; and the bad neighbourhood to be avoided is our own scurvy selves.”

On their arrival, Amik at once set about getting his advances. He was a stalwart, athletic-looking man of about thirty-five, but not the equal of his father-in-law in character. Oo-koo-hoo now told the Factor just where he intended to hunt, what fur he expected to get, and how the fur runners could best find his camp. As the price of fur had risen, the Factor told him what price he expected to pay. If, however, the price had dropped, the Factor would not have informed the hunter until his return next year. During the course of the conversation, the old hunter begged the loan of a second-hand gun and some traps for the use of his grandsons; and the Factor granted his request.

In the meantime, the women called upon the clergyman and the priest and the nuns to wish them farewell, and incidentally to do a little more begging. As they were not ready to go by noon, the Factor's wife spread a cloth upon the kitchen floor, and placed upon it some food for the party. After lunch they actually made ready to depart, and everybody came down to the landing to see us off. As the children and dogs scrambled aboard the canoes, the older woman remembered that she had



not been paid for her gift of moccasins, and so another delay took place while the Factor selected a suitable present. It is always thus. Then, at last, the canoes push off. Amid the waving of hands, the shouting of farewells, and the shedding of a few tears even, the simple natives of the wilderness paddled away over the silent lake en route for their distant hunting grounds.

Thither the reader must follow, and there, amid the fastnesses of the Great Northern Forest, he must spend the winter if he would see the Indian at his best. There he is a beggar no longer. There, escaped from the civilization which the white man is ever forcing upon the red—a civilization which rarely fails to make a degenerate of him—he proves his manhood. There, contrary to the popular idea, he will be found to be a diligent and skilful worker and an affectionate husband and father. There, given health and game, no toil and no hardship will hinder him from procuring fur enough to pay off his indebtedness, and to lay up in store twice as much again with which to engage next spring in the delightful battle of wits between white man and red in the Great Company's trading room.



## II

### IN QUEST OF TREASURE

#### THE PERFECT FOOL

IT WAS an ideal day and the season and the country were in keeping. Soon the trading posts faded from view, and when, after trolling around Fishing Point, we entered White River and went ashore for an early supper, everyone was smiling. I revelled over the prospect of work, freedom, contentment, and beauty before me; and over the thought of leaving behind me the last vestige of the white man's ugly, hypercritical, and oppressive civilization.

Was it any wonder I was happy? For me it was but the beginning of a never-to-be-forgotten journey in a land where a man can be a man without the aid of money. Yes . . . without money. And that reminds me of a white man I knew who was born and bred in the Great Northern Forest, and who supported and educated a family of twelve, and yet he reached his sixtieth birthday without once having handled or ever having seen money. He was as generous, as refined, and as noble a man as one would desire to know; yet when he visited civilization for the first time—in his sixty-first year—he was reviled because he had a smile for all, he was swindled because he knew no guile, he was robbed because he trusted everyone, and he was arrested because he manifested brotherly love toward his fellow-creatures. Our vaunted civilization! It was the regret of his declining years that circumstances prevented him from leaving the enlightened Christians of the cities, and going back to live in peace among the honest, kindly hearted barbarians of the forest.

Soon there were salmon-trout—fried to a golden brown—crisp bannock, and tea for all; then a little re-adjusting of the packs, and we were again at the paddles. Oo-koo-hoo's wife, Ojistoh, along with her second granddaughter and her two grandsons, occupied one of the three-and-a-half fathom canoes; Amik, and his wife Naudin, with her baby and eldest daughter, occupied the other; and Oo-koo-hoo and I paddled together in the two-and-a-half fathom canoe. One of the five dogs—Oo-koo-hoo's best hunter—travelled with us, while the other four took passage in the other canoes. Although the going was now up stream—the same river by which I had come—we made fair speed until Island Lake stretched before us, when we felt a southwest wind that threatened trouble; but by making a long detour about the bays of the southwestern shore the danger vanished. Arriving at the foot of the portage trail at Bear Rock Rapids, we carried our outfit to a cliff above, which afforded an excellent camping ground; and there arose the smoke of our evening fire. The cloudless sky giving no sign of rain, we contented ourselves with laying mattresses of balsam brush upon which to sleep. While the sunset glow still filled the western sky, we heard a man's voice shouting above the roar of the rapids, and on going to the brink, saw a "York boat" in the act of shooting the cataract. It was one of the boats of "The Goods Brigade" transporting supplies for the northern posts of the Hudson's Bay Company. As the craft measured forty feet in length and was manned by eight men, it was capable of carrying about seventy packs, each weighing about a hundred pounds. But of these boat brigades—more in due season.

After supper, when twilight was deepening, and tobacco—in the smoking of which the women conscientiously joined—was freely forthcoming, the subject of conversation turned to woodcraft. Since it fell to Oo-koo-hoo, as the principal hunter, to keep the party supplied with game while en route, I was won-

dering what he would do in case he saw a bear and went ashore to trail it. Would he himself skin and cut up the bear, or would he want the women to help him? If the latter, what sign or signal would he use so that they might keep in touch with him? But when I questioned Oo-koo-hoo, he replied:

“My white son”—for that is what he sometimes called me—  
“I see you are just like all white men, but if you are observant and listen to those who are wiser than you, you may some day rank almost the equal of an Indian.”

Afterward, when I became better acquainted with him, I learned that with regard to white men in general, he held the same opinion that all Indians do, and that is, that they are perfect fools. When I agreed with the old gentleman, and assured him he was absolutely right, and that the biggest fool I ever knew was the one who was talking to him, he laughed outright, and replied that now he knew that I was quite different from most white men, and that he believed some day I would be the equal of an Indian. When I first heard his opinion of white men, I regarded him as a pretty sane man, but afterward, when I tried to get him to include not only his brother Indians, but also himself under the same definition, I could not get him to agree with me, therefore I was disappointed in him. He was not the philosopher I had at first taken him to be; for life has taught me that all men are fools—of one kind or another.

#### OO-KOO-HOO'S WOODCRAFT

But to return to woodcraft. Emerson says: “Men are naturally hunters and inquisitive of woodcraft, and I suppose that such a gazetteer as wood-cutters and Indians should furnish facts for would take place in the most sumptuous drawing rooms of all the ‘Wreaths’ and ‘Flora’s Chaplets’ of the book-shops” and believing that to be true, I shall therefore tell you not only how my Indian friends managed to keep their bearings



while travelling without a compass, but how, without the aid of writing, they continued to leave various messages for their companions. When I asked Oo-koo-hoo how he would signal, in case he went ashore to trail game—when the other canoes were out of sight behind him—and he should want someone to follow him to help-carry back the meat, he replied that he would cut a small bushy-topped sapling and plant it upright in the river near his landing place on the shore. That, he said, would signify that he wished his party to go ashore and camp on the first good camping ground; while, at the same time, it would warn them not to kindle a fire until they had first examined the tracks to make sure whether the smoke would frighten the game. Then someone would follow his trail to render him assistance, providing they saw that he had blazed a tree. If he did not want them to follow him, he would shove two sticks into the ground so that they would slant across the trail in the form of an X, but if he wanted them to follow he would blaze a tree. If he wanted them to hurry, he would blaze the same tree twice. If he wanted them to follow as fast as they could with caution, he would blaze the same tree three times, but if he desired them to abandon all caution and to follow with all speed, he would cut a long blaze and tear it off.

Then, again, if he were leaving the game trail to circle his quarry, and if he wished them to follow his tracks instead of those of the game, he would cut a long blaze on one tree and a small one on another tree, which would signify that he had left the game trail at a point between the two trees and that they were to follow his tracks instead of those of the game. But if he wished them to stop and come no farther, he would drop some article of his clothing on the trail. Should, however, the game trail happen to cross a muskeg where there were no trees to blaze, he would place moss upon the bushes to answer instead of blazes, and in case the ground was hard and left an invisible trail, he would cut a stick and shoving the small end



into the trail, would slant the butt in the direction he had gone.

If traversing water where there were no saplings at hand, and he wished to let his followers know where he had left the water to cross a muskeg, he would try to secure a pole, which he would leave standing in the water, with grass protruding from the split upper end, and the pole slanting to show in which direction he had gone. If, on the arrival at the fork of a river, he wished to let his followers know up which fork he had paddled—say, for instance, if it were the right one—he would shove a long stick into either bank of the left fork in such a way that it would point straight across the channel of the left fork, to signify, as it were, that the channel was blocked. Then, a little farther up the right fork, he would plant a sapling or pole in the water, slanting in the direction he had gone—to prove to the follower that he was now on the right trail. Oo-koo-hoo further explained that if he were about to cross a lake and he wished to let his follower know the exact point upon which he intended to land, he would cut two poles, placing the larger nearest the woods and the smaller nearest the water, both in an upright position and in an exact line with the point to which he was going to head, so that the follower by taking sight from one pole to the other would learn the exact spot on the other shore where he should land—even though it were several miles away. But if he were not sure just where he intended to land, he would cut a willow branch and twist it into the form of a hoop and hang it upon the smaller pole—that would signify that he might land at any point of the surrounding shore of the lake.

If he wanted to signal his family to camp at any particular point along his trail, he would leave some article of his clothing and place near it a number of sticks standing in the form of the poles of a lodge, thus suggesting to them that they should erect their tepee upon that spot. If he had wounded big game and

expected soon to overtake and kill it, and if he wanted help to carry back the meat, he would blaze a tree and upon that smooth surface would make a sketch, either with knife or charcoal, of the animal he was pursuing. If a full day had elapsed since the placing of crossed sticks over the trail, the follower would abandon all caution and follow at top speed, as he would realize that some misfortune had befallen the hunter. The second man, or follower, however, never blazes trees as he trails the first hunter, but simply breaks off twigs or bends branches in the direction in which he is going, so that should it be necessary that a third man should also follow, he could readily distinguish the difference between the two trails. If a hunter wishes to leave a good trail over a treeless district, he, as far as possible, chooses soft ground and treads upon his heels.

When a hunter is trailing an animal, he avoids stepping upon the animal's trail, so that should it be necessary for him to go back and re-trail his quarry, the animal's tracks shall not be obliterated. If, in circling about his quarry, the hunter should happen to cut his own trail, he takes great care to cut it at right angles, so that, should he have to circle several times, he may never be at a loss to know which was his original trail. If the hunter should wish to leave a danger signal behind him, he will take two saplings, one from either side of the trail, and twist them together in such a way that they shall block the passage of the follower, requiring him to pause in order to disentangle them or to pass around them; and if the hunter were to repeat such a signal two or three times, it would signify that the follower should use great caution and circle down wind in order to still-hunt the hunter's trail in exactly the same way he would still-hunt a moose. Then, again, if the hunter should wish to let the follower know the exact time of day he had passed a certain spot, he would draw on the earth or snow a bow with an arrow placed at right angles to the bow, but point-

ing straight in the direction where the sun had been at that precise moment.

#### THE BEAR'S DEDUCTION

Owing to their knowledge of wood-craft some Indians are very clever at deduction.

On Great Slave Lake near Fort Rae an Indian cripple, named Simpson's Brother, had joined a party of canoe-men for the purpose of hunting eggs. After paddling toward a group of islands, the party separated, finally landing on different isles. They had agreed, however, to meet at sunset on a certain island and there eat and sleep together. While at work several of the Indians saw Simpson's Brother alone on a little rocky islet, busily engaged in gathering eggs. Toward evening, the party met at their rendezvous and took supper together, but strange to say, Simpson's Brother did not appear. After smoking and talking for a while, some grew anxious about the cripple. The Bear began to fear lest some mishap had befallen him; but The Caribou scoffed at the idea: he was sure that Simpson's Brother was still working and that he would soon return with more eggs than any of them. The Bear, however, thought they ought to search for him, as his canoe might have drifted away. But The Mink replied that if anything like that had happened, the cripple would certainly have fired his gun. "But how could he fire his gun if his canoe had drifted away?" asked The Bear, "for would not his gun be in his canoe?" So they all paddled off to investigate the mystery. On nearing the island, they saw the Brother's canoe adrift. When they overhauled it, sure enough his gun was aboard. They then landed on the little isle where the cripple had been at work and began calling aloud for him. As they received no answer, some of the Indians claimed that he must be asleep. The Bear replied that if he was asleep their shouting would



have awakened him and he would have answered, but that now they had best search the island.

So they divided into two parties and searched the shore in different directions until they finally met on the other side, then they scattered and examined every nook and corner of the place—but all in vain. Some now contended that the others were mistaken, and that that could not be the island on which the Brother had been working; but The Bear—though he had not seen the cripple there—insisted that it was. They asked him to prove it.

“The wind has been blowing steadily from the north,” replied The Bear, “the other islands are all south of this one, and you know that we found his canoe adrift south of here and north of all the other islands. That is sufficient proof.” Then he added: “The reason Simpson’s Brother did not answer is because he is not on the island, but in the water.”

Again they all clamoured for proof and The Bear answered: “But first I must find where he landed, and the quickest way to find that place is to remember that the wind was blowing too strong for him to land on the north shore, and that the running swells were too strong for him to land on either the east or west sides, therefore he landed on the south side—the sheltered side. Now let us go and see where he drew up his canoe.”

But one of the others argued that that would be impossible as Simpson’s Brother was not such a fool as to act like a white man and drag his canoe over the rocks. The Bear, however, persisted that there would be some sign, at least where the bow touched shore when the cripple got out, and that he, The Bear, would go and find it. But first he would go and examine the nests to learn from which of them the cripple had removed the eggs. Thus they would learn where he had been working; and the finding of the landing place would be made easier. So The Bear set to work. From the empty nests he soon learned where the cripple had been working, and after a careful search



he presently found on a big rock a little white spot no larger than a man's finger nail.

"There, my friends, is where Simpson's Brother landed, for that white mark is of gum and proves where the bow of the canoe bumped the rock."

They then asked The Bear where he thought the cripple was, and pointing, he replied:

"If we search long enough we shall find him in the deep water down there; for when Simpson's Brother was getting aboard his canoe, he slipped and in falling struck his head upon the rock; the blow stunned him, and without a struggle he slid into the water, and was drowned."

When they had brought their canoes round and had peered into the deep water, true enough, they discovered the body on the bottom of the lake. Securing a long pole, they fastened a gun worm to one end and, reaching down, twisted it into the cripple's clothing and brought the body to the surface. Sadly they placed it in the unfortunate man's canoe, towed the craft and its burden to the other island, and sent to Fort Rae for the priest, Father Roure, to come and perform the burial service.

#### BEASTS WITH HUMAN SOULS

Next morning we arose with dawn. After a hearty breakfast of fish—taken from the gill-net that had been set overnight below the rapid—the work of portaging round the rapids was begun and by about ten o'clock was finished. Noon overtook us near the mouth of Caribou River, up which we were to ascend on the first half of our journey to Oo-koo-hoo's hunting grounds. About two o'clock we entered that stream and headed westerly toward a spur of mountains that lay about a week's travel away and through which we had to pass to gain our winter camping ground. An hour later, as Oo-koo-hoo and I preceded the party, paddling up one of the channels caused

by a number of large islands dividing the river into mere creeks, we chanced upon a woodland caribou bull, as it stood among the rushes in a marshy bend watching us from a distance of not more than forty yards. As I crouched down to be out of the hunter's way, I heard him say:

"I'm sorry, my brother, but we need you for both food and clothing, so turn your eyes away before I fire." The next moment the woods echoed the report of his smooth-bore muzzle-loader—the kind of gun used by about 90 per cent. of the fur hunters of the forest. Why? Because of the simplicity of its ammunition. Such a gun never requires a variety of cumbersome shells for different kinds of game, but with varying charges of powder and shot or ball, is ready for anything from a rat or duck to a bear or moose.

Before bleeding the deer, Oo-koo-hoo did a curious thing: with his sharp knife he destroyed the deer's eyes. When I questioned him as to his purpose he replied: "As long as the eyes remain perfect, the spirit remains within the head, and I could not bear to skin the deer with its spirit looking at me." Though Oo-koo-hoo was in many ways a wise old man, he held some beliefs that were past my understanding, and others that, when I tried to analyze them, seemed to be founded on the working of a sensitive conscience.

Hearing the report of the gun, the others hurried to the scene. While the deer was being bled the old grandmother caught the blood in a pail—into which she threw a pinch of salt to clot the blood—as she wished to use it for the making of a blood pudding. Then the carcass was loaded aboard Oo-koo-hoo's canoe, rather, indeed, overloading it. Accordingly, I accepted Amik's invitation to board his craft, and at the first good place we all went ashore to clear the ground for the night's camp. There was a porcupine there, and though it moved but slowly away, my friends did not kill it, for they had plenty to eat, and did not want to be bothered with taking care

of those dangerous little quills that the women dye and use to such good advantage in their fancy work. As to the Indian method of dressing meat and skins—more anon, when we are finally settled upon the fur trail.

That evening, while flames were leaping after ascending sparks, and shadows were dancing behind us among the trees, we lounged about the fire on packs and blankets and discussed the events of the day. When I asked Oo-koo-hoo why he had addressed the deer in such a manner, he replied that it was the proper and regular way to speak to an animal, because every creature in the forest, whether beast, bird, or fish, contained the spirit of some former human being. He further explained that whenever the men of the olden time killed an unusually large animal with an extra fine coat, they did not save the skin to sell to the trader, but burnt the carcass, pelt and all, and in that way they returned the body to the spirit again. Thus they not only paid homage to the spirit, but proved themselves unselfish men. He went on to say that from the time of the Great, Great Long Ago, the Indian had always believed—as he did to-day—that every bull moose contained the spirit of a famous Indian chief, that every caribou bull contained the spirit of a lesser chief, and so on down through the whole of the animal creation. Bears, however, or rather the spirits animating them, possessed the greatest power to render good or evil, and for that reason the hunter usually took the greatest care to address Bruin properly before he slew him.

It is no wonder that the Indians still retain such ideas when, as Lord Avebury says: "We do not now, most of us, believe that animals have souls, and yet probably the majority of mankind from Buddha to Wesley and Kingsley have done so."

Another thing Oo-koo-hoo told me was that out of respect to the dignified spirit possessed by the bull moose, women were never allowed to eat of the head, nor was a moose head to be placed upon a sled upon which a woman had ever sat; for if



that were done, bad luck would follow the hunter to the end of his days. He knew of a hunter who on one occasion had been guilty of that irreverence; afterward, whenever that hunter would see a moose, the moose—instead of trying to escape—would indifferently bark at him, and even follow him back close to camp; and when that hunter would go out again, other moose would do the very same thing. Moreover, the hunter was afraid to kill any moose that acted that way, for he well knew that the animal was simply warning him of some great danger that was surely going to befall him. So, in the end, the hunter fretted himself to death. Therefore every hunter should take great care to burn all the bones of a moose's head and never on any account allow a woman to eat thereof or to feed it to the dogs. In burning the head, the hunter was merely paying the homage due to so noble a creature.

Again, a hunter might find that though he had formerly been a good moose hunter, and had always observed every custom, yet he now utterly failed to secure a moose at all. He might come upon plenty of tracks, but the moose would always escape, and prove the efforts of an experienced moose hunter of no more avail than those of a greenhorn. In such a case, there was but one thing to do, and that was to secure the whole skin—head, legs, and all—of a fawn, stuff it into its natural shape, set it up in the woods, wait till the new moon was in the first crescent, and then, just after sundown, engage a young girl to shoot five arrows at it from the regular hunting distance. If she missed, it was proof that the spirit had rejected the girl, and that another would have to be secured to do the shooting. If success were then attained, the hunter might go upon his hunt, well knowing he would soon be rewarded by bringing down a moose. Of course such ideas seem strange to us, but, after all, are we in a position to ridicule the Indians' belief? I think not, if we but recall the weird ideas our ancestors held.



The Indian, like the white man, has many superstitions, some ugly, and some beautiful, and of the latter class, I quote one: he believes that the spirits of still-born children or very young infants take flight, when they die, and enter the bodies of birds. A delightful thought—especially for the mother. For as Kingsley says of St. Francis, “perfectly sure that he himself was a spiritual being, he thought it at least possible that birds might be spiritual beings likewise, incarnate like himself in mortal flesh; and saw no degradation to the dignity of human nature in claiming kindred lovingly, with creatures so beautiful, so wonderful, who praised God in the forest, even as angels did in heaven.”

The forest Indian, however, is not content with merely stating that the spirits of infants enter birds; but he goes on to say that while the spirits of Indian children always enter the beings of the finest singers and the most beautiful of all the birds, the spirits of the children of white people enter the bodies of stupid, ugly birds that just squawk around, and are neither interesting to look at nor pleasant to listen to, but are quarrelsome, and thievish. When I asked Oo-koo-hoo to name a few birds into which the spirits of white children entered, he mentioned, among others, the woodpecker—which the Indians consider to have, proportionately, the longest and sharpest tongue of all birds. That reminds me of the reply I received from one of the characters in this book, when I wrote him, among others, requesting that he grant me permission to make use of his name, in order to add authority to my text. Like others, he begged me to refrain from quoting his name, as he was afraid that the information he had given me might be the cause of the Hudson’s Bay Company stopping his pension. I had suggested that he refer the matter to his wife as she, too, figures in this story, and the following is part of his reply: “This being an affair between you and I—I have not consulted my wife. For as you know, the human female tongue is very

similar to that of the female woodpecker: unusually long, and much too pointed to be of any use."

#### THE HONESTY OF INDIANS

But to return to the Indian's reproach of the white man's dishonesty; when he states that the spirits of white children enter only those birds that are counted great thieves, one cannot wonder at it, for as far as honesty is concerned, a comparison between the forest Indian and the white man brands the latter as a thief. Not only is that the private opinion of all the old fur traders I have met, but I could quote many other authorities; let two, however, suffice: Charles Mair, the author of "Tecumseh," and a member of the Indian Treaty Expedition of 1899, says:

"The writer, and doubtless some of his readers, can recall the time when to go to 'Peace River' seemed almost like going to another sphere, where, it was conjectured, life was lived very differently from that of civilized man. And, truly, it was to enter into an unfamiliar state of things; a region in which a primitive people, not without fault or depravities, lived on Nature's food, and thrived on her unfailing harvest of fur. A region in which they often left their beaver, silver fox, or marten packs—the envy of Fashion—lying by the dog-trail, or hanging to some sheltering tree, because no one stole, and took their fellow's word without question, because no one lied. A very simple folk indeed, in whose language profanity was unknown, and who had no desire to leave their congenial solitudes for any other spot on earth: solitudes which so charmed the educated minds who brought the white man's religion, or traffic, to their doors, that, like the Lotus-eaters, they, too, felt little craving to depart. Yet they were not regions of sloth or idleness, but of necessary toil; of the laborious chase and the endless activities of aboriginal life: the regions of a people

familiar with its fauna and flora—of skilled but unconscious naturalists, who knew no science . . . But theft such as white men practice was a puzzle to these people, amongst whom it was unknown.”

Another example worth quoting is taken from Sir William Butler’s “The Wild North Land”:

“The ‘Moose That Walks’ arrived at Hudson’s Hope early in the spring. He was sorely in want of gunpowder and shot, for it was the season when the beaver leave their winter houses and when it is easy to shoot them. So he carried his thirty martens’ skins to the fort, to barter them for shot, powder, and tobacco.

“There was no person at the Hope. The dwelling-house was closed, the store shut up, the man in charge had not yet come up from St. John’s; now what was to be done? Inside that wooden house lay piles and piles of all that the ‘Moose that Walks’ most needed. There was a whole keg of powder; there were bags of shot, and tobacco—there was as much as the Moose could smoke in his whole life.

“Through a rent in the parchment window the Moose looked at all those wonderful things, and at the red flannel shirts, and at the four flint guns and the spotted cotton handkerchiefs, each worth a sable skin at one end of the fur trade, half a sixpence at the other. There was tea, too—tea, that magic medicine before which life’s cares vanished like snow in spring sunshine.

“The Moose sat down to think about all these things, but thinking only made matters worse. He was short of ammunition, therefore he had no food, and to think of food when one is very hungry is an unsatisfactory business. It is true that the Moose that Walks had only to walk in through that parchment window and help himself until he was tired. But no, that would not do.

“‘Ah,’ my Christian friend will exclaim, ‘Ah, yes, the poor



Indian had known the good missionary, and had learnt the lesson of honesty and respect for his neighbour's property.'

"Yes; he had learnt the lesson of honesty, but his teacher, my friend, had been other than human. The good missionary had never reached the Hope of Hudson, nor improved the morals of the Moose That Walks.

"But let us go on. After waiting two days he determined to set off for St. John's, two full days' travel. He set out, but his heart failed him, and he turned back again.

"At last, on the fourth day, he entered the parchment window, leaving outside his comrade, to whom he jealously denied admittance. Then he took from the cask of powder three skins' worth, from the tobacco four skins' worth, from the shot the same; and sticking the requisite number of martens' skins in the powder barrel and the shot bag and the tobacco case, he hung up his remaining skins on a nail to the credit of his account, and departed from this El Dorado, this Bank of England of the Red Man in the wilderness. And when it was all over he went his way, thinking he had done a very reprehensible act, and one by no means to be proud of."

If it were necessary further to establish the honesty of the forest Indian, I could add many proofs from my own experience, but one will suffice:

Years ago, during my first visit to the Hudson's Bay Post on Lake Temagami, when the only white man living in all that beautiful region was old Malcolm MacLean, a "freeman" of the H. B. Co., who had married an Indian woman and become a trapper, I was invited to be the guest of the half-breed Hudson's Bay trader, Johnnie Turner, and was given a bedroom in his log house. The window of my room on the ground floor was always left wide open, and in fact was never once closed during my stay of a week or more. Inside my room, a foot from the open window, a lidless cigar box was nailed to the wall, yet it contained a heap of bills of varying denominations—ones,



fives, and tens, and even twenties; how much in all I don't know for I never had the curiosity to count them—though, at the time, I guessed that there were many hundreds of dollars. It was the trader's bank. Nevertheless, beside that open window was the favourite lounging place of all the Indian trappers and hunters who visited the Post, and during my stay a group of Indians that numbered from three or four to thirty or forty were daily loitering in the shade within a few feet of that open window. Sometimes, when I was in my room, they would even intrude their heads and shoulders through the window and talk to me. Several times I saw them glance at the heap of money, but they no more thought of touching it than I did; yet day or night it could have been taken with the greatest ease, and the thief never discovered—but, of course, there wasn't a thief in all that region.

But now that the white man has made Lake Temagami a fashionable summer resort, and the civilized Christians flock there from New York, Toronto, Pittsburgh, and Montreal, how long would the trader's money remain in an open box beside an open window on a dark night?

#### TRACKING UP RAPIDS

After breakfast next morning, while ascending Caribou River, we encountered a series of rapids that extended for nearly a quarter of a mile. Here and there, in midstream, rocks protruded above the foaming water, and from their leeward ends flowed eddying currents of back water that from their dark, undulating appearance rather suggested that every boulder possessed a tail. It was always for those long, flowing tails that the canoes were steered in their slow upward struggle from one rock to another; for each tail formed a little harbour in which the canoe could not only make easier headway, but also might hover for a moment while the paddlers caught their

breath. Then out again they would creep, and once more the battle would rage and, working with might and main, the paddlers would force the canoe gradually ahead and over into the eddy of another boulder. Sometimes the water would leap over the gunwales and come aboard with a savage hiss. At other times the canoes seemed to become discouraged and, with their heads almost buried beneath the angry, spitting waves, would balk in midstream and not move forward so much as a foot to the minute. It was dangerous work, for if at any time a canoe became inclined across the current, even to the slightest degree, it might be rolled over and over, like a barrel descending an incline. Dangerous work it was, but it was interesting to see how powerfully the Indians propelled their canoes, how skilfully they guided them, and how adroitly even the little children handled their paddles. However, we landed safely at the head of the rapids, and upon going ashore to drain the canoes, partook of a refreshing snack of tea and bannock. Then to the canoes again. The aspect of the river was now very beautiful, beautiful enough to ponder over and to dream, so we took it easy. While pipes were going we gazed, in peace and restfulness, at the reflections, for they were wonderful.

After dinner we encountered another rapid, but though it was much shorter than the former, the current ran too strong to attempt the ascent with the aid of only paddles or poles. The northern tripper has the choice between five methods of circumventing "white waters," and his selection depends upon the strength of the current: first, paddling; second, poling; third, wading; fourth, tracking; and fifth, portaging. You are already familiar with the method of paddling, and also with that of portaging, and a description of poling will shortly follow. Wading is resorted to only when the trippers, unprovided with poles, have been defeated in their effort to ascend with no other aid than their paddles. Then they leap overboard and seizing

hold of the gunwales drag the craft up the rapids before it can be overcome by the turbulent water, and either driven down stream or capsized. Again, when the trippers encounter, in shallow water, such obstacles as jammed timbers, wading allows them carefully to ease their craft around or over the obstruction.

When tracking their six-fathom canoes, or "York boats," or "sturgeon scows," the voyageurs of the north brigades use very long lines, one end of which is attached to the bow of the craft while to the other end is secured a leather harness of breast straps called *otapanapi* into which each hauler adjusts himself. Thus, while the majority of the crew land upon the shore and, so harnessed, walk off briskly in single file along the river bank, their mates aboard endeavour, with the aid of either paddles, sweeps, or poles, to keep the craft in a safe channel.

In the present instance we had to resort to tracking, but it was of a light character, for the canoes were not too heavily loaded, nor was the current too strong for us to make fair headway along the rough, pathless bank of the wild little stream. In each canoe one person remained aboard to hold the bow off shore with a paddle or pole, while the others scrambled along the river bank, either to help haul upon a line, or, in the case of the younger children and the dogs, simply to walk in order to relieve the craft of their weight and also for safety's sake, should the canoe overturn. The greatest danger is for the steersman to lose control and allow the canoe to get out of line with the current, as the least headway in a wrong direction is apt to capsize it.

With us all went well until a scream from the children announced that Ah-ging-goos, the second son, had fallen in, and anxiety reigned until the well-drenched Chipmunk partly crawled and was partly hauled ashore; and then laughter echoed in the river valley, for The Chipmunk was at times



Going to the  
brink, we saw a  
"York Boat" in  
the act of shoot-  
ing the cataract.  
It was one of the  
boats of "The  
Goods Brigade,"  
transporting  
supplies for the  
northern posts  
of the Hudson's  
Bay Company.  
As the craft  
measured forty  
feet in length  
and was manned  
by eight men, it  
was capable of  
carrying about  
seventy packs,  
each weighing  
about a hundred  
pounds. But of  
these boat bri-  
gades . . .

See Chapter II





much given to frisking about and showing off, and this time he got his reward.

But before we had ascended half the length of the rapids we encountered the usual troubles that overtake the tracker—those of clearing our lines of trees and bushes, slipping into the muck of small inlets, stumbling over stones, cutting the lines upon sharp rocks, or having them caught by gnarled roots of driftwood. As we approached the last lap of white water the canoes passed through a rocky basin that held a thirty- or forty-yard section of the river in a slack and unruffled pool. While ascending this last section, the last canoe, the one in which the old grandmother was wielding the paddle, broke away from Oo-koo-hoo, the strain severing his well-worn line, and away Grandmother went, racing backward down through the turbulent foam. With her usual presence of mind she exercised such skill in guiding her canoe that it never for a moment swerved out of the true line of the current, and thus she saved herself and all her precious cargo. Then, the moment she struck slack water, she in with her paddle, and out with her pole, stood up in her unsteady craft, bent her powerful old frame, and—her pipe still clenched between her ancient teeth—with all her might and main she actually poled her canoe right up to the very head of the rapids, and came safely ashore. It was thrilling to watch her—for we could render no aid—and when she landed we hailed her with approval for her courage, strength, and skill; but Grandmother was annoyed—her pipe was out.

#### TRAVELLING AT NIGHT

While we rested a few minutes, the women espied, in a little springy dell, some unusually fine moss, which they at once began to gather. Indian women dry it and use it in a number of ways, especially for packing about the little naked bodies of their babies when lacing them to their cradle boards. The



incident, however, reminds me of what once happened to an Indian woman and her eight-year-old daughter when they were gathering moss about a mile from their camp on the shore of Great Slave Lake. They were working in a muskeg, and the mother, observing a clump of gnarled spruces a little way off, sent her daughter there to see if there were any berries. Instead of fruit the child found a nice round hole that led into a cavern beneath the roots of the trees that stood upon the little knoll; and she called to her mother to come and see it. On kneeling down and peering within, the mother discovered a bear inside, and instantly turning about, hauled up her skirt and sat down in such a way that her figure completely blocked the hole and shut out all light. Then she despatched her child on the run for camp, to tell Father to come immediately with his gun and shoot the bear.

To one who is not versed in woodcraft, such an act displays remarkable bravery, but to an Indian woman it meant no such thing, it was merely the outcome of her knowledge of bears, for she well knew that as long as all light was blocked from the hole the bear would lie still. But perhaps you wonder why she pulled up her skirt. To prevent it from being soiled or torn? No, that was not the reason. Again it was her knowledge of bears that prompted her, for she knew that if by any strange chance the bear did move about in the dark, and if he did happen to touch her bare figure—for Indian ladies never wear *lingerie*—the bear would have been so mystified on encountering a living thing in the dark that he would make never another move until light solved the mystery. However, Father came with a rush, and shot the bear, and the brute was a big one, too.

During the rest of the afternoon we found the current quite slack and therefore, making better headway, we gained Caribou Lake about an hour before sundown; and on finding a fair wind beneath a clear sky that promised moonlight, it was decided to sail as far down the lake as the breeze would favour us, and

then go ashore upon some neighbouring isle for the balance of the night. So two stout poles were secured and laid across our two large canoes as they rested about a foot apart and parallel to one another. Then, the poles being lashed to the thwarts, a single "four-point" blanket was rigged horizontally to two masts, one standing in each canoe and both guyed with tump-lines, and leaning away from each other in order to spread the improvised sail. Two canoes so rigged cannot only make good headway, but can with safety run before a very strong wind. While Oo-koo-hoo's canoe was kept free, he nevertheless counted on having it towed, as it could then be cast off without a moment's delay in case of our coming unexpectedly upon tempting game.

Supper was no sooner over than we were lying lazily in our canoes and, to the music of babbling water and foaming wakes, rushing toward the setting sun. Soon twilight overtook us, and wrapping shadows about us, accompanied us for a while. Next starlight appeared and with myriads of twinkling lanterns showed us our way among the now silhouetted islands. Then the moon uprose and pushed a shiny head through the upper branches of the eastern trees. At first it merely peeped as though to make sure we were not afraid; then it came out boldly in glory and quickly turning our wake into a path of molten gold, began to soar above the forest.

For a while I could hear the childish prattle of the children and the crooning of Naudin as she hushed, with swaying body, her baby to her breast.

Then even those gentle sounds died away as the little forms snuggled down beneath the blankets among the dogs and bales. Occasionally a loon called to us, or an owl swooped, ghost-like, overhead, and as we passed among pine-crested isles, those weather-beaten old monarchs just stood there, and whispering to one another, shook their heads as we swept by.

Then for a few moments a mother moose with her two calves

stood knee deep in a water-lily bay, and watched us on our way. But Oo-koo-hoo was now too drowsy to think of anything but sleep. So hour after hour went by while the moon rose higher and higher, and circling round to the westward, began to descend in front of us.

#### POLING UP RAPIDS

Out of the east came dawn with a sweep of radiant splendour. Still we sailed westward, ever westward, until the sun rose and through the rising mist showed us that the mouth of Caribou River opened right before us; then, happily, we landed on a little island to breakfast, and to drowse away a couple of hours on mossy beds beneath the shade of wind-blown pines.

Besides shooting a few ducks and a beaver, and seeing a distant moose, nothing happened that was eventful enough to deflect my interest from the endless variety of charming scenery that came into view as we swept round bend after bend of that woodland river; at least, not until about four o'clock, when we arrived at the foot of another rapid. This Oo-koo-hoo and Amik examined carefully from the river bank, and decided that it could be ascended by poling. So from green wood we cut suitable poles of about two inches in diameter and from seven to nine feet in length and knifed them carefully to rid them of bark and knots. Then, for this was a shoal rapids, both bowman and sternman stood up, the better to put the full force of their strength and weight into the work; the children, however, merely knelt to the work of wielding their slender poles; but in deep water, or where there were many boulders and consequently greater risk if the canoe were overturned, all would have knelt to do the work.

Going bow-on straight for the mid-stream current, we plied our poles to good advantage. Each man remembered, however, to lift his pole only when his mate's had been planted



firmly in the river bottom. Then he would fix his own a little farther ahead and throw all his weight and strength upon it, while at the same moment his companion went the same round. Then he would firmly re-fix his pole a little farther up stream, and then once again shoved in unison. Thus foot by foot we crept up stream. It was hard but joyous work, for standing up in a canoe surrounded by a powerful and treacherous current gave us the thrill of adventure.

#### OO-KOO-HOO VISITS BEAVERS

All the canoes having mounted the white water, however, in safety, it was decided, though sunset was several hours away, to spend the night at the head of the rapids, as the place afforded an excellent camping ground and besides, the next day was Sunday, a day upon which all good trippers cease to travel. While the canvas tepee, and my tent, too, were being erected, we heard the dogs barking and growling several hundred yards away, so Amik, slipping on his powder horn and bullet pouch, ran to investigate. Presently the report of his gun was added to the din, then silence reigned; and when we went to see what had happened we found that the hunter had shot a two-year-old moose heifer that the dogs had bayed. Then, as was her custom, Granny came with her pail to catch the blood, and to select the entrails she needed to hold it. By supper time the moose had not only been skinned but the carcass dressed, too. After the meal was over, Granny washed the entrails inside and out and then stuffed them with a mixture of blood and oatmeal that she had prepared and seasoned with salt, and hung her home-made sausages high up inside the tepee to let them congeal and also to be out of reach of the dogs. In the meantime, Amik had made two frames, and Naudin and her daughters had stretched and laced into them, not only the moose hide, but the skin of the caribou as well; and when the

meat was cut up and hung from the branches of a tree, it was time to sit around the fire and have our evening talk.

But Oo-koo-hoo, slipping away in his hunting canoe, paddled up a little creek into a small lake in which he knew a colony of beavers lived. He was gone about an hour and upon his return he told us about it. On gaining the little mere, he, without removing his paddle from the water, propelled his canoe slowly and silently along the shore in the shadow of the overhanging trees, until a large beaver lodge appeared in the rising mist; and then standing up in his canoe—in order to get a better view—he became motionless. Minutes passed while the rising moon cast golden ripples upon the water, and two beavers, rising from below, swam toward and mounted the roof of their island home. Then, while the moonlight faded and glowed, other beavers appeared and swam hither and thither; some hauling old barkless poles, others bringing freshly cut poplar branches, and all busily engaged. A twig snapping behind the hunter, he turned his head, and as he caught a vanishing glimpse of a lynx in a tree, he was instantly startled by a tremendous report and a splashing upheaval of water beside his canoe. A beaver had been swimming there, and on seeing the hunter move, had struck the water with its powerful tail, to warn its mates before it dived. The lynx had been watching the beaver.

“Did you bring back anything?”

“No, my son,” Oo-koo-hoo replied, “that hunting-ground belongs to an old friend of mine.”

#### WOODCRAFT OF TRAILING

After a while the subject of woodcraft arose. When I inquired as to how I could best locate the north in case I happened to be travelling on a cloudy day without a compass, the old hunter replied, that though he never used a compass, he found

no difficulty in determining the north at any time, as the woods were full of signs. For instance, the branches of trees had a general tendency to be less numerous and shorter on the north side, and the bark on the north side was usually finer in texture and of a smoother surface. Also moss was more often found on the north side of vertical trees. The tops of pine trees usually leant toward the southeast—but that that was not always a sure sign in all localities, as in some places the tree tops were affected by the prevailing winds. The stumps of trees furnished a surer indication. They showed the rings of growth to be greater in thickness on the north side. When trees were shattered by lightning, the cracks more often opened on the south side for lightning generally struck from that direction. Snow was usually deeper on the south side of trees on account of the prevailing northerly winds; and if one dug away the crust from around a tree they would come to fine, granulated snow much sooner on the north side, thus proving where the shadow usually fell. Furthermore, as the snowdrifts always pointed in the direction whither the wind had gone, knowing the direction of the prevailing winds, one had no trouble in locating the north even on the snow-covered surface of a great lake.

The old woodman cautioned me that if, while travelling alone upon a big lake, I should be overtaken by a blizzard, in no case should I try to fight it, but stop right in my tracks, take off my snowshoes, dig a hole in the snow, turn my sled over on its side to form a wind-break, crawl into the hole with the dogs, and wait until the storm subsided. If a blizzard came head-on it was useless to try to fight it, for it would easily win; but if the wind were fair and if one were still sure of his bearings, he might drift with the wind, although at heavy risk, as the wind is apt to change its course and the tripper lose his way. There was always one consolation, however, and that was that the greater the storm the sooner it was over. Another thing I should remember when travelling on a lake or over an



open country, in a violent snow-storm—I should allow for drifting, much in the same way as one would if travelling by canoe.

By that time, however, the women and children had gone to sleep upon their evergreen beds, while we three men continued to converse in whispers over the glow of the fading fire. Next I asked Oo-koo-hoo in which direction men usually turned when lost in the woods—to the right or to the left? He replied that circumstances had much to do with that, for the character of the country affected the man's turning, as it was natural to follow the line of least resistance; also it depended somewhat on the man's build—whether one leg were shorter than the other. But though he had repeatedly experimented, he could not arrive at any definite conclusion. However, when trying blindfolded men on a frozen lake, he noticed that they had a tendency to turn to the south regardless of whether they were facing east or west. And he concluded by remarking that he thought people were very foolish to put so much faith in certain statements, simply because they were twice-told tales.

Upon my questioning him as to how a hunter would act, if, for instance, he were trailing a moose, and suspected that he was being followed by enemies, say a pack of wolves, or strange hunters, he informed me that if that happened to him—that if he suspected some enemy were following his trail—he would not stop, nor even look around, but at the first favourable opportunity, when he was sure he couldn't be observed, he would leave the game trail, circle back a mile or so through the woods, and upon cutting his old track would at once learn what was following him. Then if it were worth while he could trail his pursuers and, coming up behind them, could take them unaware. But if all this happened on a lake or in open country, where he could not circle back under cover, he would suddenly turn in his tracks, as though upon a pivot,

and without losing the least headway or causing a moment's delay in his pace, he would continue walking, but now in a backward direction, long enough to give himself ample time to scrutinize his distant trail. By manœuvring thus, he could study his pursuers without arousing their suspicion, for whether they were animals or men, the chances would be—if they were some distance away—that they would never notice that he had turned about, and was now inspecting his own tracks.

As regards trailing game, whether large or small, he cautioned me to watch my quarry carefully, and instantly to become rigid at the first sign that the game was about to turn round or raise its head to peer in my direction. More than that, I should not only remain motionless while the animal was gazing toward me, but I should assume at once some form that suggested the character of the surrounding trees or bushes or rocks. For example, among straight-boled, perfectly vertical trees, I should stand upright; among uprooted trees, I should assume the character of an overturned stump, by standing with inclined body, bent legs, and arms and fingers thrust out at such angles as to suggest the roots of a fallen tree. And he added that if I doubted the wisdom of such an act, I should test it at a distance of fifty or a hundred paces, and prove the difficulty of detecting a man who assumed a characteristic landscape pose among trees or rocks. That was years before the World War had brought the word *camouflage* into general use; for as a matter of fact, the forest Indians had been practising *camouflage* for centuries and, no doubt, that was one reason why many of the Indians in the Canadian Expeditionary Force did such remarkable work as snipers.

#### INDIANS IN THE WORLD WAR

For instance: Sampson Comego destroyed twenty-eight of the enemy. Philip Macdonald killed forty, Johnny Ballantyne

fifty-eight. "One of their number, Lance-Corporal Johnson Paudash," as the Department of Indian Affairs states, "received the Military Medal for his distinguished gallantry in saving life under heavy fire and for giving a warning that the enemy were preparing a counter-attack at Hill Seventy; the counter-attack took place twenty-five minutes after Paudash gave the information. It is said that a serious reverse was averted as a result of his action. Like other Indian soldiers, he won a splendid record as a sniper, and is officially credited with having destroyed no less than eighty-eight of the enemy. Another Indian who won fame at the front was Lance-Corporal Norwest; he was one of the foremost snipers in the army and was officially credited with one hundred and fifteen observed hits. He won the Military Medal and bar. Still another, Corporal Francis Pegahmagabow, won the Military Medal and two bars. He distinguished himself signally as a sniper and bears the extraordinary record of having killed three hundred and seventy-eight of the enemy. His Military Medal and two bars were awarded, however, for his distinguished conduct at Mount Sorrell, Amiens, and Passchendaele. At Passchendaele, Corporal Pegahmagabow led his company through an engagement with a single casualty, and subsequently captured three hundred Germans at Mount Sorrell.

"The fine record of the Indians in the great war appears in a peculiarly favourable light when it is remembered that their services were absolutely voluntary, as they were specially exempted from the operation of the Military Service Act, and that they were prepared to give their lives for their country without compulsion or even the fear of compulsion."

Many military medals were won by the Canadian Indians; Captain A.G.E. Smith of the Grand River Band of the Iroquois having been decorated seven times by the Governments of England, France, and Poland, and many distinguished them-



selves by great acts upon the battlefield. "Another Indian to be decorated was Dave Kisek. During the heavy fighting around Cambrai he unstrapped a machine gun from his shoulder and advanced about one hundred yards to the German position, where he ran along the top of their trench, doing deadly execution with his machine gun. He, single-handed, took thirty prisoners upon this occasion. This Indian came from the remote regions of the Patricia district. Sergeant Clear Sky was awarded the Military Medal for one of the most gallant and unselfish deeds that is recorded in the annals of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. During a heavy gas attack he noticed a wounded man lying in 'No Man's Land' whose gas mask had been rendered useless. Clear Sky crawled to him through the poisonous fumes, removed his own mask, and placed it on the wounded man, whose life was in consequence saved. Sergeant Clear Sky was himself severely gassed as a result of his heroic action. Joe Thunder was awarded the Military Medal for a feat of arms of an exceptionally dramatic character. He was separated from his platoon and surrounded by six Germans, each of whom he bayoneted. George McLean received the Distinguished Conduct Medal in recognition of the performance of a feat which was an extraordinary one even for the great war. Private McLean, single-handed, destroyed nineteen of the enemy with bombs and captured fourteen."

And yet not a single Canadian Indian has claimed that he won the World War—not even Pegahmagabow, who shot three hundred and seventy-eight Germans.

#### APPROACHING GAME

But to return to the land of peace. Of course, in attempting to deceive game, one must always guard against approaching down wind, for most animals grow more frantic over the scent than they do over the sight of man. Later on, when I went

hunting with Oo-koo-hoo, he used to make me laugh, for at one moment he would be a jolly old Indian gentleman, and just as likely as not the next instant he would be posing as a rotten pine stump that had been violently overturned, and now resembled an object against which a bear might like to rub his back and scratch himself.

Often have I proved the value of the old hunter's methods, and I could recite not a few instances of how easy it is to deceive either birds or animals; but I shall mention only one, which happened on the borderline of Alaska. I was running through a grove of heavy timber, where the moss was so deep that my tread made no sound, when suddenly rounding a large boulder, I came upon a black bear less than fourteen paces away. It was sitting upon its haunches, directly in the foot-path I was following. As good luck would have it, I saw him first, and for the fun of it, I instantly became an old gray stump—or tried to look like one. Presently the bear's head swung round, and at first he seemed a bit uneasy over the fact that he had not seen that stump before. It appeared to puzzle him, for he even twisted about to get a better view; but after watching me for about five minutes he contentedly turned his head away. A few minutes later, however, he looked again, and becoming reassured, yawned deliberately in my face. But by that time, being troubled with a kink in my back, I had to straighten up. Then, strange to say, as I walked quietly and slowly round him to gain the path ahead, the brute did not even get up off his haunches—but such behaviour on the part of a bear rarely happens.

Perhaps you wonder why I didn't shoot the brute. I never carry a gun. For when one is provided with food, one can carry no more useless thing than a gun; so far as protection is concerned, there is no more need to carry a gun in the north woods, than to carry a gun down Broadway; in fact, the wolves of Broadway—especially those of the female species—are much

more dangerous to man than the wolves of the Great Northern Forest.

## SUNDAY IN CAMP

Next morning being Sunday, we did not strike camp, and the first thing the women attended to, even while breakfast was under way, was the starting of a fire of damp, rotten wood, which smoked but never blazed, and over which, at a distance of about four feet, they leant the stretched deerskins, hair side up, to dry. Besides those, other frames were made and erected over another slow fire, and here the flakes or slabs of moose flesh were hung to be dried and smoked into what is called jerked meat. The fat, being chopped up and melted in a pail, was then poured into the moose bladder and other entrails to cool and be handy for future use. Of course, it would take several days to dry out the deerskins; so each morning when we were about to travel, the skins were unlaced and rolled up, to be re-stretched and placed over another fire the following evening.

Sunday was pleasantly spent, notwithstanding that so many different religious denominations were represented in camp: for while old Ojistoh counted her beads according to the Roman Catholic faith, Amik and Naudin were singing hymns, as the former was an English Churchman and his wife a Presbyterian; but Oo-koo-hoo would join in none of it as he had no faith whatever in the various religions of the white men and so he remained a pagan. Part of the day we spent in pottering about, in doing a little mending here and there, smoking, telling stories, or in strolling through the woods; as both Oo-koo-hoo and Amik were opposed to doing actual work on Sunday. In the afternoon I turned to sketching, and my drawing excited so much interest that Amik tried his hand, and in a crude way his sketches of animals and birds were quite graphic in character. One sketch I made, that of the baby, so pleased Neykia,



that I gave it to her, and when she realized my intention she seized it with such eagerness that she crumpled and almost tore the paper; for as the Ojibways have no word to express their thanks, they show their gratitude by the eagerness with which they accept a present.

That, however, reminds me of having read in one of the leading American magazines an account of a noted American illustrator's trip into the woods of Quebec. While there he presented a red handkerchief to an Indian girl. The fact that she snatched it from him, and then ran away, was to him—as he stated—a sign that she was willing to comply with any evil intentions he might entertain toward her. Such absolute rot! The polite little maid was merely trying to express her unbounded thanks for his gift.

The only thing that interrupted our paddling the following day was our going ashore to portage around a picturesque waterfall where two huge rocks, on the very brink of the cascade, split the river into three. When we had carried up the canoes, we found the children making a great to-do about wasps attacking them; for they had put down their packs beside a wasps' hole; and old Granny, seeing the commotion, had put down her end of the canoe, and with disgust exclaimed:

“Oh, my foolish people, always standing around and waiting for old Granny to fix everything!” So saying, she pulled a big bunch of long, dry grass, and lighting it, ran with a blanket over her head, and placed the fire against the wasps' hole; in a moment they ceased their attack and utterly disappeared.

We were now nearing the fork of Crane River, that in its three-mile course came from Crane Lake, on the shore of which was Oo-koo-hoo's last winter's camping ground; the men therefore decided that it was best for Amik to push on in the light canoe and get the two deerskin winter tepee coverings, as well as their traps, that had been cached there last spring; and then

return to the fork of the river where the family would go into camp and wait for him.

## NEARING TRIP'S END

Transferring most of the cargo to the other canoes, Amik and I provided ourselves with a little snack and started at once for Oo-koo-koo's old camping ground. It appeared about a three-mile paddle to the fork of the river. Nothing save the quacking of ducks rushing by on the wing, the occasional rise of a crane in front of us, the soaring of an eagle overhead, and the rippling wakes left by muskrats as they scurried away, enlivened our hurried trip. We found the leather lodge coverings in good order upon a stage, and securing them along with several bundles of steel traps that hung from trees, we put all aboard and found we had quite a load, for not only were the tepee coverings bulky, each bundle being about two feet thick by four feet long, but they were heavy, too, for each weighed about a hundred pounds. Then, too, the traps were quite a load in themselves. I didn't stop to count them, but it is surprising the number of traps a keen, hard-working hunter employs; and they ranged all the way from small ones for rat and ermine to ponderous ones for bears. Also we gathered up a few odds and ends such as old axes, an iron pot, a couple of slush scoops, a bundle of fish-nets, and a lot of old snowshoes. Crane Lake, like many another northern mere, was a charming little body of water nestling among beautiful hills. After a cup of tea and some bannock, we once more plied our paddles.

Now it was down stream and we glided swiftly along, arriving at the confluence of the Crane and Caribou just before twilight and found smiling faces and a good supper awaiting our return. How human some Indians are, much more so than many a cold-blooded white.

Next day we wanted to make the Height-of-land portage

for our camp. As it meant a long, stiff paddle against a strong current for most of the distance, we were up early, if not bright, and on our way before sunrise. This time, however, no rapids impeded us and we reached the portage on the farther shore of Height-of-land Lake, tired and hungry, but happy over a day's work well done. It was a pretty little lake about two miles long, surrounded by low-lying land in the midst of a range of great rock-bound hills, and its waters had a whimsical fashion of running either east or west according to which way the wind struck it. Thus its waters became divided and, flowing either way, travel afar to their final destinations in oceans thousands of miles apart. But the western outlet, Moose Creek, being too shallow for canoes, a portage of a couple of miles was made the following day, to the fork of an incoming stream that doubles its waters and makes the creek navigable. When we camped that night the hour was late. Then a two-days' run—the second of which we travelled due north—took us into Moose Lake; but not without shooting three rapids, each of which the Indians examined carefully before we undertook the sport that all enjoyed so much. An eastern storm, however, caught us on Moose Lake and not only sent us ashore on an island, but windbound us there for two days while cold showers pelted us. Another day and a half up Bear River, with a portage round Crane Falls, landed us on the western shore of Bear Lake at the mouth of Muskrat Creek—and there we were to spend the winter.

There, too, I remembered Thoreau when he said: "As I ran down the hill toward the reddening west, with the rainbow over my shoulder, and some faint tinkling sounds borne to my ear through the cleansed air, from I know not what quarter, my Good Genius seemed to say,—'Go fish and hunt far and wide day by day,—farther and wider,—and rest thee by many brooks and hearth-sides without misgiving. Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Rise free from care before



the dawn, and seek adventures. Let the noon find thee by other lakes, and the night overtake thee everywhere at home'." And furthermore: "Let not to get a living be thy trade, but thy sport. Enjoy the land, but own it not. Through want of enterprise and faith men are where they are, buying and selling, and spending their lives like serfs."

### III

## OO-KOO-HOO'S EL DORADO

### OUR WINTER CAMP

BEAR LAKE was beautiful. Its shores were fringed here and there with marshy reeds or sandy beaches; and its rivulets, flowing in and out, connected it with other meres in other regions. At dawn moose and caribou came thither to drink; bears roamed its surrounding slopes; lynxes, foxes, fishers, martens, ermines, and minks lived in its bordering woods. Otters, muskrats, and beavers swam its intruding creeks; wolverines prowled its rocky glens, and nightly concerts of howling wolves echoed along its shores. The eagles and the hawks built their nests in its towering trees, while the cranes fished and the ruffed grouse drummed. Nightly, too, the owls and the loons hooted and laughed at the quacking ducks and the honking geese as they flew swiftly by in the light of the moon. Salmon-trout, whitefish, pike, and pickerel rippled its placid waters, and brook-trout leaped above the shimmering pools of its crystal streams. It was Oo-koo-hoo's happiest hunting ground, and truly it was a hunter's paradise . . . a poet's heaven . . . an artist's home.

"What fools we mortals be!"—when we live in the city!

The site chosen for the lodges was on one of two points jutting into the lake, separated by the waters of Muskrat Creek. On its northwest side ran a heavily timbered ridge that broke the force of the winter winds from the west and the north, and thus protected Oo-koo-hoo's camp, which stood on the southeast side of the little stream. Such a site in such a region afforded wood,

water, fruit, fish, fowl, and game; and, moreover, an enchanting view of the surrounding country. Furthermore, that section of The Owl's game-lands had not been hunted for forty-two moons.

Immediately after dinner the men began cutting lodge poles, while the women cleared the tepee sites and levelled the ground. On asking Oo-koo-hoo how many poles would be required for the canvas lodge which he had kindly offered me the use of for the coming winter, he replied:

"My son, cut a pole for every moon, and cut them thirteen feet in length, and the base of the tepee, too, should be thirteen feet across." Then looking at me with his small, shrewd, but pleasant eyes, he added: "Thirteen is our lucky number. It always brings good fortune. Besides, most canoes are made of thirteen pieces, and when we kill big game, we always cut the carcasses into thirteen parts. My son, when I have time I shall carve a different symbol upon each of the thirteen poles of your lodge; they shall represent the thirteen moons of the year, and thus they will enable you to keep track of the phase of the season through which you are passing."

All the poles were of green pine or spruce. The thin ends of three of the stoutest were lashed together; on being erected, they formed a tripod against which the other poles were leant, while their butts, placed in a circle, were spread an equal distance apart. Over that framework the lodge covering was spread by inserting the end of a pole into the pocket of each of the two windshields, and then hoisting the covering into place. Next the lapping edges, brought together over the doorway, were fastened securely together with wooden pins, while the bottom edge was pegged down all round the lodge with wooden stakes. In the centre of the floor-space six little cut logs were fastened down in the form of a hexagon, and the earth scooped from within the hexagon was banked against the logs to form a permanent and limited fireplace. The surrounding floor space was covered with a layer of fir-brush, then a layer of



rushes, and finally, where the beds were to be laid, a heavy mattress of balsam twigs laid, shingle-fashion, one upon another, with their stems down. Thus a springy, comfortable bed was formed, and the lodge perfumed with a delightful forest aroma. Above the fireplace was hung a stage, or framework of light sticks, upon which to dry or smoke the meat. Around the wall on the inner side was hung a canvas curtain that overlapped the floor, and thus protected the lodgers from draught while they were sitting about the fire. The doorway was two feet by five, and was covered with a raw deerskin hung from the top. A stick across the lower edge kept the skin taut. A log at the bottom of the doorway answered for a doorstep and in winter kept out the snow. Now the lodge was ready for occupation.

As there are six different ways of building campfires, it should be explained that my friends built theirs according to the Ojibway custom; that is, in the so-called "lodge fashion", by placing the sticks upright, leaning them together, and crossing them over one another in the manner of lodge poles. When the fire was lighted, the windshields formed a perfect draught to carry the smoke up through the permanently open flue in the apex of the structure, and one soon realized that of all tents or dwellings, no healthier abode was ever contrived by man. Indeed, if the stupid, meddlesome agents of civilization had been wise enough to have left the Indians in their tepees, instead of forcing them to live in houses—the ventilation of which was never understood—they would have been spared at least one of civilization's diseases—tuberculosis—and many more tribesmen would have been alive to-day.

On entering an Indian tepee one usually finds the first space, on the right of the doorway, occupied by the woodpile; the next, by the wife; the third, by the baby; and the fourth, by the husband. Opposite these, on the other side of the fire, the older children are ranged. To the visitor is allotted the

warmest place in the lodge, the place of honour, farthest from and directly opposite the doorway. When the dogs are allowed in the tepee, they know their place to be the first space on the left, between the entrance and the children.

While the two leather lodges of the Indians stood close together with stages near at hand upon which to store food and implements out of reach of the dogs and wild animals, my tepee, the canvas one, stood by itself a little farther up the creek. Taking particular pains in making my bed, and settling everything for service and comfort, I turned in that night in a happy mood and fell asleep contemplating the season of adventure before me and the great charm of living in such simplicity. "In the savage state every family owns a shelter as good as the best, and sufficient for its coarser and simpler wants," says Thoreau, "but I think that I speak within bounds when I say that, though birds of the air have their nests, and the foxes their holes, and the savages their wigwams, in modern civilized society not more than one half the families own a shelter. In the large towns and cities, where civilization especially prevails, the number of those who own a shelter is a very small fraction of the whole. The rest pay an annual tax for this outside garment of all, become indispensable summer and winter, which would buy a village of Indian wigwams but now helps to keep them poor as long as they live. . . . But how happens it that he who is said to enjoy these things is so commonly a *poor* civilized man, while the savage, who has them not, is rich as a savage?"

Next morning, while roaming about the point, I discovered two well-worn game trails that, converging together, led directly to the extreme outer end of our point. The tracks were the wild animals' highways through that part of the woods, and were used by them when they desired to make a short cut across that end of the lake by way of a neighbouring island. Worn fairly smooth, and from three to five inches in depth, by from eight

to ten inches in width, these tracks were entirely free of grass or moss. In following them a few hundred paces, I could plainly recognize the prints of the moose, the bear, the wolf, and the fox; and a few smaller and lesser impressions with regard to the origin of which I was not so sure. The trails were much like the buffalo trails one used to see upon the plains. To my delight, my lodge door was not more than ten paces from that wild Broadway of the Wilderness.

#### INDIAN POLITENESS

After breakfast Oo-koo-hoo suggested that a "lop-stick" should be cut in honour of the white man's visit. Selecting a tall spruce, Amik, with a half-axe in hand, began to ascend it. When he had climbed about three parts of the way up he began to chop off the surrounding branches and continued to do so as he descended, until he was about halfway down, when he desisted and came to earth. The result was a strange-looking tree with a long bare trunk, surmounted by a tuft of branches that could be seen and recognized for miles around.

Cutting lop-sticks is an old custom of the forest Indians. Such trees are used to mark portages, camping grounds, meeting places, or dangerous channels where submerged rocks lie in wait for the unsuspecting voyageur. In fact, they are to the Indian what lighthouses are to the mariner. Yet, sometimes they are used to celebrate the beginning of a young man's hunting career, or to mark the grave of a famous hunter. When made to indicate a wilderness rendezvous, the meeting place is commonly used for the purpose of coming in contact with their nearest neighbours or friends, and halting a day or so, while upon their voyage to the post, in order to discuss their affairs—the winter's hunt, the strange tracks they have seen, the strange sounds they have heard, the raiding of their hunting ground, and the like. Always at such meetings a fire is kindled regard-



less of the season, an ancient custom of their old religion, but used to-day more for the purpose of lighting pipes. Beside the fire a post stripped of its bark is erected, and on it a fire-bag containing tobacco for the use of all hands is hung. Around the fire the women and children spread a carpet of brush, upon which the men sit while conversing. At such meetings one never hears two Indians talk at once—a fine example for white people to heed—nor do they openly contradict one another as the vulgar white man does, for such an offence would be considered, by the savage, rude—and the offender would be regarded as no better than a white man; for they believe themselves to be not only the wisest and the bravest, but the politest people in the world; and when one stops to compare the average Indian with the average white man in North America, one must grant that the savage is right.

In relation to their politeness I can go beyond my own observation and quote the experience of Sir Alexander Henry—whom they called Coseagon—while he was held a prisoner.

“I could not let all this pass without modestly remarking that his account of the beginning of things was subject to great uncertainty as being trusted to memory only, from woman to woman through so many generations, and might have been greatly altered, whereas the account I gave them was written down by direction of the Great Spirit himself and preserved carefully in a book which was never altered, but had ever remained the same and was undoubtedly the truth. ‘Coseagon,’ says Canassatego, ‘you are yet almost as rude as when you first came among us. When young it seems you were not well taught; you did not learn the civil behaviour of men. We excused you; it was the fault of your instructors. But why have you not more improved since you have long had the opportunity from our example? You see I always believe your stories. That is, I never contradict them. Why do you not believe mine?’ Contradiction, or a direct denial of the

truth of what another says, is among the Indians deemed extremely rude. Only great superiority, as of a father to a child, or of an old counsellor to some boy, can excuse it. Alaquippy and the other Indians kindly made some apology for me, saying I should be wiser in time, and they concluded with an observation which they thought very polite and respectful toward me, that my stories might be best for the white people, but Indian stories were undoubtedly best for Indians."

Furthermore, if we compare the philosophy of the red man and the white, we find that just because the white man has invented a lot of asinine fashions and customs, a lot of unnecessary gear and junk, and feeds himself on unhealthy concoctions that give him indigestion and make his teeth fall out, he flatters himself that he is the wisest man on earth, whereas, all things considered, in my humble opinion, he is the prize fool of the universe—for removing himself so far from nature. And when the female follower of Dame Fashion goes mincing along the cement-paved street in her sharp-toed, French-heeled slippers, on her way to the factory, she flatters herself that she knows better than God how to perfect the human foot; then the All Wise One, in His just wrath, strikes back at her by presenting her with a luxuriant crop of varicose veins, corns, ingrowing nails, fallen arches, and bunions that supply her with suffering in plenty for the rest of her days. Her red sister, on the contrary, in moccasined feet, walks naturally through the forest; and The Master of Life, beholding her becoming humility, rewards her with painless pleasure.

But to return to the Indians' meeting places in the wilderness. The important meetings held in the forest are always opened by smoking. No man speaks without first standing up, and his delivery is always slow and in short, clear sentences. In the past there were great orators among the red men as many of the old writers and traders affirm—but again I quote Sir Alexander Henry:

"Old Canassatego, a warrior, counsellor, and the chief man of our village, used to come frequently to smoke and talk with me, while I worked at my new business (mending of gun locks), and many of the younger men would come and sit with him, pleased to hear our conversations. As he soon saw I was curious on that head he took a good deal of pains to instruct me in the principles of their eloquence, an art (it may seem strange to say it, but it is strictly true) carried much higher among these savages than is now in any part of Europe, as it is their only polite art, as they practice it from their infancy, as everything of consequence is transacted in councils, and all the force of their government consists in persuasion."

Once when questioning Oo-koo-hoo regarding old Indian customs, he informed me that among Indians bowing was a very recent innovation, and that the men of the olden time—the fire-worshippers or sun-worshippers—never deigned to bow to one another: they bowed to none but the Deity. They took not the Great Spirit's name in vain; nor did they mention it save in a whisper, and with bowed head. He regretted that since coming in contact with the irreverent and blaspheming white men, his people had lost much of their old-time godly spirit.

#### TRAPPING EQUIPMENT

For the next few days the work done by the men was confined to odd jobs in preparation for the coming winter, and the laying out of their future trapping trails. They built some stages upon which to store the canoes, and others nearer the lodges, upon which to place their guns, sleds, and snowshoes. They cut and shaved axe-handles and helved them. They overhauled traps, and got ready all their trapping gear. It was always interesting to watch Oo-koo-hoo and Amik, even when they were engaged upon the most trivial forest work, for much of it was new to me and it was all so different from the



ways of civilization. Then, too, they had taken the boys in hand and were instructing them in relation to the hunter's art.

The first thing they did with the traps, after seeing that the old ones were in working order, was to boil both the new ones and the old ones for about half an hour in pots in which was placed either pine, or spruce, or cedar brush. This they did—Oo-koo-hoo explained—to cleanse the old traps and to soften the temper of the new ones, thus lessening the chances of their breaking in zero weather; and also to free both old and new from all man-smell and to perfume them with the natural scent of the forest trees, of which no animal is afraid. The traps they used were the No. 1, "Rat," for muskrats, ermines, and minks; the No. 2, "Mink," for minks, martens, skunks, and foxes; the No. 3, "Fox," for foxes, minks, martens, fishers, wolves, wolverines, skunks, otters, and beavers; the No. 4, "Beaver," for beavers, otters, wolves, wolverines, and fishers; the No. 5, "Otter," for otters, beavers, wolves, wolverines, and small bears; and the "Bear" trap in two sizes—*A*, large, and *B*, small, for all kinds of bears and deer. Traps with teeth they did not use, as they said the teeth injured the fur.

Next to the knife, the woodsman uses no more useful implement than the axe. Even with the professional hunter, the gun takes third place to the knife and the axe. As between the two makes of axes—the American and the Canadian—the former appears the best. It is really a good fair-weather axe, but winter work proves the superiority of the Canadian implement. The latter does not chip so readily in cold weather. Furthermore, the eye of the American axe is too small for the soft-wood helve usually made in the northern forest, since in many parts no wood harder than birch is to be had. But to reduce the high temper of the American axe, the hunter can heat the head in fire until it becomes a slight bluish tinge and then dip it in either fish oil or beaver oil. The sizes of axes run: "Trappers," 1½ lbs.; "Voyageurs," 2½ lbs., "Chopping," 3½ lbs., and "Felling," 4 lbs.

At last the eventful morning arrived. Now we were to go a-hunting. The trap-setting party was to be composed of four persons: Oo-koo-hoo, the two boys, and myself. Our *ne-mar-win*—provisions—for four, to last a week, consisted of: one pound of tea, eight pounds of dried meat, four pounds of grease, four pounds of dried fish, and a number of small bannocks; the rest of our grub was to be secured by hunting.

Of course, while hunting, Oo-koo-hoo always carried his gun loaded—lacking the cap—but it was charged with nothing heavier than powder and shot, so that the hunter might be ready at any moment for small game; yet if he encountered big game, all he had to do was to ram down a ball, slip on a cap, and then be ready to fire at a moose or a bear.

#### SETTING FOX TRAP

After the usual affectionate good-bye, and the waving of farewell as we moved in single file into the denser forest, we followed a game trail that wound in and out among the trees and rocks—always along the line of least resistance—and for a while headed westward through the valley of Muskrat Creek. Oo-koo-hoo led the way and, as he walked along, would occasionally turn and, pointing at the trail, whisper:

“My white son, see, a moose passed two days ago . . . That’s fox—this morning,” and when we were overlooking the stream, he remarked: “This is a good place for muskrats, but I’ll come for them by canoe.”

The principal object of the trip was to set fox and marten traps. Hilly timberland of spruce or pine, without much brushwood, is the most likely place for martens; and in fairly open country foxes may be found. The favourite haunt of beavers, otters, fishers, minks, and muskrats is a marshy region containing little lakes and streams; while for lynxes, a willowy valley interspersed with poplars is the usual resort.

Coming to an open space along the creek, the wise old Owl concluded from the fox signs he had already seen, and from the condition of the soil on a cut bank, that it was a desirable place in which to set a steel trap for foxes. Laying aside his kit, he put on his trapping mits, to prevent any trace of man-smell being left about the trap, and with the aid of his trowel he dug into the bank a horizontal hole about two feet deep and about a foot in diameter. He wedged the chain-ring of the trap over the small end of a five-foot pole to be used as a clog or drag-anchor in case the fox tried to make away with the trap. The pole was then buried at one side of the hole. Digging a trench from the pole to the back of the hole, he carefully set the trap, laid it in the trench near the back of the hole, so that it rested about half an inch below the surface of the surrounding earth, covered it with thin layers of birch bark (sewed together with *watap*—thin spruce roots) then, sifting earth over it, covered all signs of both trap and chain, and finally, with a crane's wing brushed the sand into natural form. Placing at the back of the hole a duck's head that Ne-geek had shot for the purpose, Oo-koo-hoo scattered a few feathers about. Some of these, as well as the pan of the trap, had been previously daubed with a most stinking concoction called "fox bait"—hereafter called "mixed bait" to prevent confusing this with other baits.

It was composed of half a pound of soft grease, half an ounce of aniseed, an eighth of an ounce of asafoetida, six to ten rotten birds' eggs, and the glands taken from a female fox—all thoroughly mixed in a jar and then buried underground to rot it, as well as for safe keeping. The reason for such a concoction is that the cold in winter does not affect the stench of asafoetida; aniseed forms a strong attraction for many kinds of animals; foxes are fond of eggs; and no stronger lure exists for an animal than the smell of the female gland. So powerful is the fetor of this "mixed bait," and so delicious is the merest



whiff of it, that it forms not only an irresistible but a long-range allurement for many kinds of fur-bearers. Indeed, so pungent was it, that Oo-koo-hoo carried merely a little of it in a cap-box, and found that a tiny daub was quite sufficient to do his work. The reason for using the two kinds of bait was that while the mixed bait would attract the animal to the trap by its scent, the sight of the duck's head would induce the fox to enter the hole, step upon the unseen trap while reaching to secure its favourite food, and thus be caught by a foreleg.

The mention of an animal being caught by a foreleg reminds me of the strange experience that Louison Laferte, a French half-breed, manservant at Fort Rae, once had with a wolf. Louison was quite a wag and at all times loved a joke. One day while visiting one of his trapping paths with his four-dog team he came upon a wolf caught in one of his traps by the foreleg. After stunning the brute, he found that its leg was in no way injured, for it had been in the trap but a short time. Louison, in a sudden fit of frolic humour, unharnessed his Number 3 dog and harnessed in its place the unconscious wolf. When the wild brute came to, and leaped up, the half-breed shouted: "*Ma-a-r-r-che!*" and whipped up his dogs. Off they went, the two leading dogs pulling the wolf along from in front, while the sled-dog nipped him from behind and encouraged him to go ahead. Thus into Fort Rae drove the gay Louison with an untamed timber-wolf in harness actually helping to haul his sled as one of his dog-team. The half-breed kept the wolf for more than a month trying to train it, but it proved so intractable and so vicious that fearing for the children around the Post, eventually he killed it.

#### DOG TRAILING FOX

It is generally conceded by the most experienced fur-hunters of the northern forest, that while the wolverine is a crafty brute

and difficult to hunt, yet of all forest creatures the coloured fox is the hardest to trap. In hunting the two animals with dogs, however, there is little comparison. The wolverine, being a heavy, short-legged beast, can soon be overhauled in an open country or on a beaten trail by a dog, or in deep snow even by a man on snowshoes; while the chances of a fox being run down by a dog are not so good. Some hunters, however, kill many foxes by running them down with dogs, and for such work they use a light-weight, long-legged dog possessed of both long sight and keen scent. Hunters declare that no animal, not even the wolf, has so much endurance as a good hunting-dog.

When a hunting-dog sights a fox on a frozen lake he runs straight for him. The fox, on realizing that he is being pursued, leaps wildly into the air two or three times, and then makes off at tremendous speed—much faster than the dog can run. But in about half a mile the fox, becoming played out, stops to rest a moment and to look around to see if the dog is still following. Then, on seeing the dog still in pursuit, he sets off in another great burst of speed. Meanwhile, the dog has gained on him, and the fox, discovering this, bolts off at a different angle. The dog, however, observing what has happened, takes advantage of his quarry, and cuts the corner and thereby makes another gain. The fox, now more alarmed than ever, makes another turn, and the dog cuts another corner and makes another gain. Thus the race goes on until the fox comes to the conclusion that the dog is sure to get him, loses both heart and wind and finally lies down from sheer exhaustion. The dog rushes at him, seizes him between the forelegs, and with one crunch the hunt is over.

It is much the same in the deep snow of the timberland. There the fox will start off with great bounds that sink him deep into the snow and make the scent only the stronger for the dog. Meanwhile, the dog lopes steadily along, though far out of sight. The fox stops to listen and learn if his enemy is

still pursuing him. When the dog finally comes into view, the fox changes his course, and the dog cuts the corner, and thus the story ends in the usual way.

#### OTHER WAYS OF TRAPPING

As the methods of hunting the wolf, the marten, the lynx, and the wolverine are founded on the various ways of trapping the fox, a full description of how foxes are hunted may be of interest. Then, too, the reader will be enabled to understand more easily, without unnecessary repetition, the modes of trapping other animals. My description, however, will apply only to the hunting of the crafty coloured foxes of the forest, and not to their stupid brethren of the Arctic coasts—the white and the blue foxes.

Of course, every Indian tribe believes its own manner of hunting to be the master way, but it is conceded by experienced fur-traders that the Ojibway method is the best. When setting a fox trap in the winter time, the first thing an Ojibway does is to jab into the snow, small end down, and in an upright position, the clog or drag-pole. With his knife he then cuts a hole in the snow exactly the size of the set trap, the plate of which has already been daubed with mixed bait. In this hole the trap is placed in such a position that it rests about half an inch below the surface of the snow. A thin shield of birch bark covers this, and then with a crane's wing the snow is brushed over both trap and chain so that no sign remains. Then in addition to the mixed bait, he plants about the spot food bait, such as bits of rotten fish or duck.

Most hunters have a regular system for setting their traps so that they may know exactly where and how they are placed. Usually he sets them east and west, then cutting a notch on a branch—about a foot from the butt—he measures that distance from the trap, and thrusts the branch into the snow



in an upright position, as though it were growing naturally. The stick serves not only to mark the trap, but in an open space to furnish the same attraction for a fox as a tree does for a dog; besides, when the hunter is going his rounds, at the sight of the branch he will remember where and how his trap is set, and can read all the signs without going too near. The object of laying the sheet of birch bark over the trap is that when any part of the bark is touched the trap may go off; besides, it forms a hollow space beneath, and thus allows the animal's foot to sink deeper into the trap, to be caught farther up, and to be held more securely.

The foregoing is the usual way of setting a fox trap, yet the Wood Crees and the Swampy Crees set their fox traps on mounds of snow about the size of muskrat houses. For that purpose they bank the snow into a mound about eighteen inches high, bury the drag-pole at the bottom, set the trap exactly in the crest of the mound, and, covering up all traces of trap and chain with powdered snow, sprinkle food bait and mixed bait around the bottom of the mound. The approaching fox, catching scent of the mixed bait, follows it up and then eats some of the food bait, which presently gives him the desire to go and sit upon the mound—which is the habit of foxes in such a condition—and thus he is caught.

A curious thing once happened to a Dog-rib Indian at Great Slave Lake. One day he found a wolf caught in one of his traps and foolishly allowed his hunting-dog to rush at it. The wolf leaped about so furiously that it broke the trap chain, and ran out upon the lake, too far for the hunter's gun. In pursuit of the wolf, the dog drew too near and was seized and overpowered by the wolf. In order to save his dog the hunter rushed out upon the lake; and when within fair range, dropped upon one knee and fired. Unluckily, the ball struck the trap, smashed it, and set the wolf free; and all the hunter got for his pains was a dead dog and a broken trap—while the wolf went scot free.



*Minutes passed while the rising moon cast golden ripples upon the water and two beavers, rising from below, swam toward and mounted the roof of their island home. A twig snapping behind the hunter, he turned his head, and as he caught the vanishing glimpse of a lynx in a tree, he was instantly startled by a tremendous report and a splashing upheaval . . . See Chapter II*





The Chipewyan and Slave Indians set their traps inside a lodge made of eight or ten poles, seven or eight feet in length, placed together lodge fashion and banked round with a wall of brush to prevent the fox entering except by the doorway. The trap is set in the usual way, just outside the entrance, the chain being fastened to one of the door poles. Instead, however, of being placed on the snow around the trap, the mixed bait is put on a bit of rabbit skin fastened in the centre of the lodge; the idea being that the fox will step on the trap when he endeavours to enter. The Louchieux Indian sets his trap the foregoing way, but in addition he sets a snare in the doorway of the lodge, not so much to catch and hold the fox, as to check him from leaping in without treading on the trap.

Oo-koo-hoo told me that whenever a trap set in the usual way had failed to catch a fox, he then tried to take advantage of the cautious and suspicious nature of the animal by casting about on the snow little bits of iron, and re-setting and covering his trap on the crest of some little mound close at hand without any bait whatever. The fox, returning to the spot where he had scented and seen the bait before, would now scent the iron, and becoming puzzled over the mystery would try to solve it by going to the top of the mound to sit down and think it over; and thus he would be caught.

Another way to try for a fox that has been nipped in a trap and yet has got away is to take into account the strange fact that the animal will surely come back to investigate the source of the trouble. The hunter re-sets the trap in its old position and in the usual way; then, a short distance off, he builds a little brush tepee, something like a lynx-lodge, which has a base of about four feet, and by means of a snare fastened to a tossing-pole, he hangs a rabbit with its hind feet about six inches above the snow. A mixed-bait stick is placed a little farther back, in order to attract the fox, while another trap is set just below the rabbit. The idea of re-setting the first trap

in the old position is to put the fox off his guard when he approaches the dead rabbit hanging in the snare. As, no doubt, he has seen a rabbit hang many times before, and snares so baited he has often robbed. The Indian in his extreme care to avoid communicating man-smell to the rabbit will even remain to leeward of it while he handles it, lest man-scent should blow against the rabbit and adhere to the fur. If that happened, the fox would be so suspicious that he would not go near the rabbit.

But to illustrate how stupid the white fox of the Arctic coast is in comparison with the coloured fox of the forest, the following story is worth repeating. It happened near Fort Churchill on the northwest coast of Hudson Bay. The trader at the post had given a certain Eskimo a spoon-bait, or spoon-hook, the first he had ever seen; and as he thought it a very wonderful thing, he always carried it about with him. The next fall, while going along the coast, he saw a pack of white foxes approaching, and having with him neither a trap nor a gun, he thought of his spoon-hook. Tearing a rag off his shirt, he rubbed on it some porpoise oil which he was carrying in a bladder, fastened the rag about the hook, laid it on a log directly in the path of the approaching foxes, and, going to the end of the line, lay down out of sight to watch what would happen. When the foxes drew near, one of them seized the bait, and the Eskimo, jerking the line, caught the fox by the tongue. In that way the native caught six foxes before he returned to the post; but then, as everyone in the Far North knows, white foxes are proverbially stupid creatures.

The more expert the hunter, the more pride he takes in his work. Before leaving a trap, he will examine its surroundings carefully and decide from which angle he wishes the animal to approach; then by arranging cut brush in a natural way in the snow he will block all other approaches, and thus compel the unsuspecting fox to carry out his wishes.

When a fox springs a trap without being caught, he rarely pauses to eat the bait, but leaps away in fright. The hunter, however, knowing that the fox will soon return, not only leaves the trap as the fox left it, but sets another trap, or even two more, without bait, close to the first, where he thinks the fox will tread when he makes his second visit. If that fails, he will trace the fox's trail to where it passes between thick brush and there he will set a trap in the usual way, but without bait, right in the fox's track. Then he will cut brush and shore up the natural bushes in such a way that, no other opening being left, the fox must return by his own track, and run the chance of being caught. Should that method also fail, the hunter will set another trap in the trail close to the first, in the hope that if one trap does not catch the fox, the next will.

Another device is to break a bit of glass into tiny slivers which the hunter mixes with grease and forms into little tablets that he leaves on the snow. If the fox scents them, the chances are that he will swallow each tablet at a single gulp. Presently he will feel a pain in his stomach. At first this will cause him to leap about, but as his sufferings will only increase, he will lie down for an hour or so. When he finally rises to move away, he will feel the pain again. Once more he will lie down, and the chances are that he will remain there until found either dead or alive by the hunter.

#### FASHIONABLE FOOLS

If my readers, especially my women readers, should feel regret at the great suffering resulting from fur-hunting, they should recall to mind its chief contributory cause—those devotees of fashionable civilization who mince around during the sweltering days of July and August in furs. The mere thought of them once so filled with wrath a former acting Prime Minister of Canada—Sir George Foster—that he lost his usual flow of



suave and classic oratory, and rearing up, roared out in the House of Parliament: "Such women get my goat!"

Truly, there is much suffering in the wilderness, especially on account of civilization; but if my readers will be patient enough to wade through these few paragraphs of pain, they may later on find enough novelty, beauty, and charm in the forest to reward them for reading on to the end.

But to return to foxes—they are much given to playing dead. Once, while travelling in Athabasca with Caspar Whitney, the noted American writer on Sport and Travel, we came upon a black fox caught in a steel trap. One of our dog-drivers stunned it and covered it with a mound of snow in order to protect its pelt from other animals, so that when the unknown trapper came along he would find his prize in good order. Three days later, when I passed that way, the fox was sitting upon the mound of snow, and was as alive as when first seen. This time, however, my half-breed made sure by first hitting the fox on the snout to stun it, and then gently pressing his moccasined foot over its heart until it was dead—the proper way of killing small fur-bearing animals without either injuring the fur or inflicting unnecessary pain.

Colin Campbell, a half-breed at York Factory, once had a different experience. He had been on a visit to an Indian camp with his dog-train and on his way back found a white fox in one of his traps. He stunned it in the usual way and pressed his foot over its heart; and when he was sure it was dead, placed it inside his sled-wrapper and drove home. On arriving at the Fort he unhitched his sled from the dogs, and leaving them harnessed, pulled his sled, still containing its load, into the trading room; where, upon opening the wrapper to remove the load, the fox leaped out and, as the door was closed, bolted in fright straight through the window, carrying the glass with it, and escaped before the dogs could be released from their harness.

There are, however, other ways of catching the fox. One is to chop a hole in the ice on a river or lake, fill the hole with water and place in it a "hung" white-fish, in such a position that, when the water freezes, about one third of the fish will protrude above the ice. Then in the usual way, but without bait or sign, set one or two traps near the fish. When the fox arrives, he may succeed in eating the fish's head, but when he tries to dig the rest of the fish out of the ice, he will become too interested to remain cautious, and in shifting his place of stance will soon be taken prisoner. But sometimes a knowing old fox will first dig about in the snow, and on finding the trap, will thereafter be able to eat the fish in safety.

Mention of the fish bait recalls what strange things occasionally happen in relation to hunting. A half-breed hunter, named Pierre Geraud, living near Fort Isle à la Crosse, in laying out his trapping trail one winter, had set one of his mink deadfalls in a swamp close to the water-line; and on visiting the trap after the spring flood, found a large pike caught in it. All the signs showed that when the flood had been at its height the fish had been swimming about, and on discovering the bait set for mink had seized it, and in trying to make away with it had set off the trap, the heavy drop-log falling and killing the fish.

When I expressed surprise that an animal should have intelligence enough not only to find a buried trap, but to dig it up and then spring it without being caught, Oo-koo-hoo explained that it was not so much a matter of animal intelligence as of man's stupidity; for whenever that happened it did not prove to the animal's credit, but to man's discredit; the careless hunter having simply left enough man-smell on the trap to form a guide that told the animal exactly where the trap lay. Then, the overwhelming curiosity of the fox had compelled it to investigate the mystery by digging it up, and when found, the fox in its usual way would play with the strange

object; just as a domestic kitten would do, and so the fox would set off the trap.

#### THE LAST RESORT

On my first trips into the forest, whenever I questioned an Indian hunter as to the cause of this or that, the completeness of his graphic explanation always puzzled me; for I could not understand how it was that when he was not an eye-witness, he knew all the details of the affair as well as though the dead animal itself had told him the full story. But when I, too, began to study Nature's book on woodcraft, it amazed me no longer; for then I realized that to those who had studied enough it was easy to read the drama of the forest; especially in the winter, for then Nature never fails to record it, and every story is always published just where it happens. Even to those who have not taken the Indian degree in woodcraft, it is not difficult to read in winter time the annals of animal life in the forest, for then Nature describes with ample detail many an interesting story. In winter time, too, even a blind Indian can follow a trail of which a town-bred man with normal sight could see no trace.

If his steel traps fail, the Indian may resort to still another method—the gun trap—regardless of the fact that this may lessen the value of the animal's pelt. A gun, first carefully cleaned and loaded with the exception of the cap, is placed in a nearly horizontal position about two feet above the snow and lashed securely to two posts; the barrel slanting downward to a point about a foot in height and eight feet away. At that precise spot the bait stick is so fixed that when the fox seizes the bait, its head will be directly in line with the gun-barrel. Fastened to the bait by one end will be a thong, the other end of which will be attached to the trigger, and will discharge the gun when the bait is seized. When all is in readiness, the cap is



put on the nipple, and a birch-bark shelter arranged to keep the gun-lock free from falling snow. Brush is then placed in the snow in such a way that it will cause the fox to approach from only one direction, and that the one the hunter desires. It is not a good trap, being very uncertain, as whiskey-jacks, ermine, mice, or rabbits may meddle with it, and set it off. It is seldom used except for wolverine.

Frequently the value an Indian places upon a certain pelt is determined not according to its quality, but according to the trouble the animal caused him in securing it, and for that reason he will sometimes expect more for a red fox pelt than for the skin of a beautiful black fox. Then, in order to retain the Indian's goodwill, the experienced trader will humour him by giving the price asked, and count on making up his loss in another way.

In hunting fur-bearers poison should never be used, since it bleaches the fur and thus reduces its value. Moreover, it is apt to kill in an almost endless chain many forest creatures besides the animal sought, as they may feed on the first victim to the deadly drug.

The hunter's last resort in trapping the coloured fox is to set a snare for him. In setting a snare the Chipewyan and northern Indians always use a tossing-pole, while most of the southern and eastern Indians use a spring-pole; the difference being that a tossing-pole is usually made by bending down a small tree—the size of the tree being determined by the size of the game—to the top of which is fastened the snare; or the tossing-pole may be made by cutting a pole for that purpose. The result, however, being that the moment the snare is sprung the tossing-pole flies free, and hauling the game into the air, holds it there out of reach of other animals that might rob the hunter of his prize. A spring-pole is made by setting a springy pole in such a position that when the snare is sprung, the tension is released, and the pole, springing up, hauls the animal against

a stationary bar set horizontally above the loop of the snare, and holds the quarry there. Many kinds of animals are caught with snares, and in size they run all the way from rabbits to bears and even to the great bull-moose.

#### HUNTER CAUGHT IN SNARE

Snares, steel traps, and deadfalls that are set for large game are dangerous even for man to approach carelessly, and sometimes even the trapper himself has the misfortune to be caught in the very trap he has set for some other animal. Early one winter, in fact, just after the first heavy snowfall, and while some bears were still roaming about, before turning in for their long winter sleep, an Indian hunter—I have forgotten his name—assisted by his son, had just set a powerful snare for bears. Soon after starting for home, the hunter, discovering that he had left his pipe by the trap, told his son to go on to camp, and he would return to recover his treasure. On arriving at the snare, he saw his pipe lying just beyond his reach at the back of the loop, but instead of walking round the brush fence and picking it up from behind, as he should have done, he foolishly put his leg through the snare in order to reach and dislodge his pipe. By some evil chance his foot caught upon the loop; and instantly he was violently jerked, heels over head, into the air, and there hung head downward struggling for his life. He had made the tossing-pole from a strong tree, up which his son had climbed with a line, and by their combined weight they had forced the tree top over and down until they could secure it by setting the snare. The tossing-pole, when the snare went off, sprung up with such force that it not only dislocated the hunter's right leg at the knee, but it threw his knife out of its sheath, and, consequently, he had no means by which he could cut the line, nor could he unfasten it or even climb up—for he was hanging clear of the tree. Presently,

however, he began to bleed from the nose and ears; and in his violent effort to struggle free, he noticed that he was swinging from side to side; then it dawned upon him that if he could only increase the radius of his swing he might manage to reach and seize hold of the tree, climb up to slacken the line, unfasten the snare, and set himself free. This, after much violent effort, he finally accomplished; but even when he reached the ground, everything seemed utterly hopeless, for on account of his dislocated leg, he could not walk. So there he lay all night long. During twilight, as fate ordained, the wounded man had a visitor; it was a bear, and no doubt the very bear for which he had set his snare. But the bear, in approaching, did not notice the man until it was almost on top of him, and then it became so frightened that it tore up into a neighbouring tree and there remained for hours. By midnight, however, it came down, and then it was the suffering hunter's turn to become alarmed, for the big brute passed very close to him before it finally walked away. A little after sunrise the hunter's son arrived, but not being able to carry his father, and fearing lest the bear might return before he could secure help, he decided to leave his father there, while he went in search of the bear. Tracking it, he soon came upon it and shot it dead. Back he hastened to camp and, with his mother, returned with a sled and hauled the wounded man home.

#### THE FOX AT HOME

The "coloured" foxes, including the red, the cross, the silver, and the black—the latter three being merely colour phases of the former and not separate species, as has frequently been proved, but all four having been found in the same litter—mate in February and March. They pair and remain faithful partners. The father also helps in feeding and caring for the young which are born about fifty days after the mating season. The litter



contains from three to ten, and when a few weeks old the young are as playful and as interesting as domestic kittens. The den in which they are born may be a hollow tree, a hollow log, or more often an underground tunnel with several entrances and a storeroom besides the living chamber. The nest is never lined, but left quite bare and is kept clean. Their principal food is derived from mice, birds, fowl, and rabbits; and the parents frequently cache food for both their young and themselves. No wonder they are good providers, for what with their keen sense of scent and their great speed they seldom fail in their hunts. They are fond of open country and have an individual range of very few miles, perhaps ten at the most. In winter they run singly until the mating season; seldom are the tracks of more than two foxes seen together, and their principal enemies are men, wolves, lynxes, and dogs.

As the district through which we were passing was rich in fox-signs, Oo-koo-hoo set a number of traps. Such work takes time, and when we reached a well-wooded grove of second-growth birch, poplars, and—along a little creek—willows, we began to think of where we should camp for the night. Besides, the old hunter deemed it an ideal spot in which to set lynx and rabbit snares. So while the boys cut wood for the fire and brush for our beds, and then turned to the cooking of supper, Oo-koo-hoo cut a great mass of birch, poplar, and willow branches and tops, and threw them into piles, not only to attract the rabbits thither, but to afford them a prolonged feast for many weeks, and thus fatten them for his own use; moreover, the gathering of the rabbits would prove a strong attraction for the lynxes of the region. Sometimes, at such a spot, hundreds of rabbits will feed, and in winter time the place may become such a network of runways that if it happens to be a fairly open hillside one can see from half a mile away the shadows of the endless tracks that mark the glistening snow in all directions.

During the years of great plenty—which the Indians and traders assert come about every seventh year—the number of rabbits in some sections of the northern forest is almost beyond belief. Then a plague suddenly overtakes them, almost wiping them out of existence, and several years elapse before the disease disappears and they begin to increase again. The plague, of course, is the rabbit's greatest enemy, then follows the lynx, the fox, the wolf, and many other animals and even birds such as the owl and the hawk; but somewhere among that destructive group man plays a prominent part.

#### THE RABBIT AND THE HUNTER

The rabbit, or more properly the varying-hare, of the northern forest is also called the snowshoe rabbit, from the fact that nature has provided it with remarkable feet that allow it to run with ease over the deepest and softest snow. It wears a coat that changes colour with the changing seasons: brown in summer and white in winter. Its food is derived principally from the bark of the poplar, the willow, and the birch. In winter time rabbits are found to be fattest when the moon is full, and that is accounted for by the fact that they feed at night, and feed most when the moon is giving light. Besides, on stormy nights, especially between moons, they remain more under cover and feel less inclined to venture out even to secure their needed food. In all the north woods there is no animal that is of more use to man, beast, or bird, than the rabbit, nor is there any animal that is so friendly to all alike; yet no other creature of the wilderness is so preyed upon as the rabbit. But in winter its safety lies not so much in the great speed it possesses as in its snowshoe feet and in its skill in dodging. Rabbits mate in March and April, the usual litter of three or four being born about a month later. The nest is usually on the ground in some sheltered place under brushwood that forms a good pro-

tection, and the nest is lined with leaves, grass, or their own cast-off fur.

A rabbit snare is made of fine *babiche*, sinew, cord, or wire, and the loop is hung over a rabbit runway just high enough to catch it round the neck. In its struggles it sets off the spring or tossing-pole, thus usually ending its sufferings. When thus caught the flesh is tender and sweet; but when caught by a leg the flesh is flabby and tasteless, the reason being that when caught by the neck the rabbit is killed almost instantly; but when snared by a leg it hangs struggling in pain for hours before it finally bleeds at the nose and dies, or is frozen to death. When the latter happens, however, the rabbit is usually thrown to a dog or used for trap bait. The reason Oo-koo-hoo set the rabbit snares was not so much for present needs as to provide meals for the hunter while on his future rounds; also to keep on hand a goodly supply of trap bait.

Expert hunters, when they have time, prefer to hunt rabbits by calling them. In the rutting season they imitate the love-call of the female, and in other seasons they mimic the cries of the young; in either case, the unsuspecting animals come loping from all directions, and the hunter bowls them over with fine shot. Calling takes much practice, but when the hunter has become an adept, it is the easiest and the quickest way of catching them.

In relation to setting snares for rabbits, Mrs. Wm. Cornwallis King, the wife of a well-known Hudson's Bay Company's chief trader, once had an unusual experience. She had set for rabbits a number of snares made of piano wire, and when visiting them one morning she was astonished and delighted, too, to find caught in one of her snares a beautiful silver fox; stranger still, the fox was caught by its tongue. As usual, after investigation, the snow told the whole story in a graphic way. It showed that the fox had been pursuing a rabbit, both going on the full run, and the latter always dodging in the effort to



escape from its enemy. Finally, the rabbit had bolted past the snare, and the panting fox, with its tongue hanging out, following close behind, accidentally had touched its wet tongue against the wire, and the frost of many degrees below zero had instantly frozen it there. Then the fox, struggling to get free, had set off the snare, which closing on its tongue had hauled it into the air, where it had hung with just the tip of its tail and its hind toes resting on the snow. When Mrs. King found it, it was dead.

That evening, when the fire sank low and we turned in, a pack of timber wolves for fully an hour sang us a most interesting lullaby; such a one, indeed, that it made the goose-flesh run up and down our backs—or rather my back—just as really fine music always does; and to tell the truth, I enjoyed it more than many a human concert I have heard.

#### HUNTING THE LYNX

It was cool next morning and cloudy and threatening snow. Five rabbits had been caught during the night, and after breakfast we turned to setting lynx snares. The steel trap is set for the lynx much in the same way as it is for the fox; but for the lynx, a snare is preferable. It is set with or without a tossing-pole, at the entrance of a brush-lodge, the base of which is about five feet wide. The bait used is made by rubbing beaver castorum on a bit of rabbit skin placed in a split stick set vertically in the centre of the lodge. A surer way, however, is to also set a steel trap in front of the lodge door, so that if the lynx does not enter, he may be caught while looking in. The Indians often hunt them with dogs, for, when pursued, the lynx soon takes to a tree and then is easily shot. But the most proficient hunters like to hunt them by calling. They imitate its screech and also its whistle, for the lynx whistles somewhat like a jack-rabbit, though the sound is coarser and

louder. Some Indians are very successful in this mode of hunting.

Besides being able to whistle, the lynx far surpasses the domestic cat in the range and volume of his evening song; and during the rutting season, at sunrise and sunset, he has a peculiar habit of beating or drumming with his forepaws on the hard snow or earth. No doubt it is a form of challenge, used much in the same way as the drumming of cock-grouse; martens and rabbits do the same. The lynx is a wonderful swimmer and is dangerous to tackle in the water, for he can turn with remarkable agility, and board a canoe in a moment. Of all northern animals he is perhaps the most silent walker, for in the night a band of five or six lynxes may pass close beside one's tent and never be heard, though a single rabbit, passing at the same distance, may make enough noise to awaken a sound sleeper. Though he often behaves like a coward, hunters approach him with care when he is caught in a steel trap, as he can make a great spring and when he chooses, can fight desperately. While in summer he is a poor runner, in winter he is greatly aided by his big feet, which act as snowshoes and help him over the soft snow and the deep drifts. Few animals succeed in killing him, for what with his unusual speed in water and the fact that he can climb a tree with almost the ease of a monkey, his chances of escape are always good.

Lynxes mate in March, the young being born about three months later, the litter consisting of from one to five. The father assists in the support of the kittens, which are much like those of the domestic cat. The lynx's coat is gray mottled with brown, but in winter it turns a lighter colour; in weight he runs from thirty-five to forty-five pounds. His principal food is derived from rabbits and any other animals he can kill, from beaver down, as well as grouse, ptarmigan, and other birds and fowl; occasionally he will tackle the young of deer, but he never dares to molest man. When his catch is more than

sufficient for his present need, he caches the remainder in snow or earth for future use. He is as cleanly as a house cat, and his flesh when cooked resembles a cross between rabbit and veal.

#### MARTEN TRAPPING

After setting a number of snares for lynxes we resumed our march, and on rounding the end of a little lake, saw two fresh moose-tracks. Following them up, we finally came to a park-like region, where was very little underbrush, and where most of the trees were pine and spruce—an ideal spot for marten. So Oo-koo-hoo, forgetting all about his moose-tracks, made ready to set some marten traps.

For one marten an Indian catches in a steel trap he catches a dozen in wooden deadfalls; but with the white trapper it is different—he relies chiefly on the steel traps. Steel traps are set either in the open or in the tracks of the marten in exactly the same way as for foxes, and either with or without tossing-poles. The largest and best deadfalls used by the Indians are those they set for bears. The city-dwelling author, or illustrator, who has not lived in the wilderness, would never think of depicting an Indian trapper with a big hand-auger hanging from his belt, perhaps no more than he would depict a pirate armed with a big Bible; yet, nevertheless, it is a fact that the Indian trapper nowadays carries an auger much as the old buccaneer carried his cutlass—thrust through his belt. Somehow or other, I never could associate Oo-koo-hoo's big wooden-handled auger with his gun and powder-horn, and all the while I was curious as to what use he was going to make of it. Now I was to have my curiosity satisfied.

First he selected an evergreen tree about a foot in diameter—this time it was a pine—and with his axe cut a horizontal notch one to two inches deep; then he blazed the tree six or eight inches down to the notch, in order to form a smooth, flat sur-



face; then he took his big auger and bored down into the tree, at an incline of about twenty degrees, a hole of two inches' diameter and nine inches deep. Allowing at that spot for two feet of snow, he had bored the hole about thirty inches above ground. Then taking two inch-and-a-quarter, thin, sharp-pointed nails he drove them obliquely into the tree just above the hole, so that about three quarters of each protruded into the hole. He did the same with two other nails below the hole, but this time drove them upward until they, too, protruded into the hole. Both sets of nails were driven in about an inch and a quarter apart. The bait used was a duck's head placed at the bottom of the hole. The idea was that when the marten scented the bait, he would crawl into the hole to secure it; but when he tried to withdraw, he would find himself entrapped by the four sharp-pointed nails that, though they allowed him to slip in, now prevented him from backing out as they ran into his flesh, and held him until the hunter, placing two fingers of each hand over the four nail-points, seizing with his teeth the animal's tail, and throwing back his head, would draw his victim out. But such work is rather risky, as the hunter may be bitten before he has a chance to kill the marten.

Though it is a very recent mode of trapping—only about thirty-five years old—it is now considered the best of all ways for taking marten, as the traps not only remain set all winter, but they last for years. Later I learned from a chief factor that it was invented by a *Saulteaux* Indian named *Ke-now-keoose*, who was at one time employed as a servant of the *Hudson's Bay Company*, where he learned the use of carpenter's tools—later, when he left the service, he hunted and trapped along the *Athabasca*, the *Slave*, and the *Mackenzie* rivers. Sometimes twenty-five to thirty such traps are set by a hunter in a single day. Mink and ermine are often caught in them, and on one occasion even a *wolverine* was taken. The *wolverine*, having scented the bait, followed it up, and while



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endeavouring to secure the dainty duck's head, thrust his forepaw into the hole and was thus taken prisoner.

Oo-koo-hoo took pains to teach the boys everything in relation to trapping, and as soon as he was sure they had mastered the details of setting such traps, he went ahead with his axe to blaze the right trees, while the boys followed with the auger, and in the work of boring the holes and driving the nails took turn and turn about. But after all, the old-fashioned deadfall is more humane than any other way of trapping, as it often ends the animal's suffering at once by killing it outright, instead of holding it a prisoner till it starves or is frozen to death, before the hunter arrives on his usual weekly round of that particular trapping path.

Martens mate in February or March, the young being born about three months later, either in a hole in the ground or in a hollow tree; the nest being lined with moss, grass, or leaves, and the litter numbering usually from two to four. The marten is a wonderfully energetic little animal, even more tireless than the squirrel and as great a climber. It is an expert hunter and its food includes birds, fish, chipmunks, birds' eggs, mice, fruit, and rabbits; and it stores its surplus food by burying it.

#### MINK ON THE FUR TRAIL

By the time Oo-koo-hoo and his grandsons had set twelve or fifteen traps it was nearing noon, so we had lunch before starting off in search of another rich game region. While on our way that afternoon the old hunter again discovered signs of wolverines and it worried him, for it meant not only the destruction of many of his traps, but also the ruining of the pelts of some of the animals he might catch. Continuing, we soon entered an ideal valley for mink, where two turbulent little crystal streams roared at one another as they sprang together among the rocks and then fell down into dark,

eddying pools where, no doubt, trout leaped after flies in due season.

The mink is a small animal, about two feet long, including his tail. In colour he is of a dark, rich brown. Though he is not a swift runner and is rather a poor climber, he is an excellent swimmer and is a desperate fighter of great strength. Minks mate in February and March; the female burrowing in a bank, a rocky crevice, or beneath a log or a stump, or perhaps in a hollow tree; the nest is lined with moss, feathers, or grass, and the young are born about forty days after the mating season. The minks' food may be flesh, fish, or fowl and, if overstocked, it is stored for future use.

On land, the mink is caught exactly as the fox, the fisher, or the marten is caught, except, of course, that there is a difference in the size of the traps. In water, the steel trap is set just below the surface and rests on the muddy or sandy bottom, where it is half covered with soil as it lies in readiness close to the bank where the mink is in the habit of passing in and out of the stream. Mixed bait is placed on the branches of the near-by bushes. In order, however, to better his chances of catching the mink, the hunter may build a deadfall near the trap, where the animal is in the habit of entering the bush. Then extra bait of rancid fish or duck is used. This mode of water-trapping applies, also, to muskrat, otter, and beaver. The mink, however, is a stupid creature, and it does not require great skill to trap him; but the hunter, nevertheless, must take care when removing him from the trap, for the little brute has the heart of a lion and will tackle anything, regardless of size.

We camped that night on the hillside overlooking "Mink Creek" as Oo-koo-hoo called it, and next morning we again set out on our circular way, for on leaving our lodges, we first headed almost due west for about three miles, then we turned south for two more, and gradually working round, we were soon

facing east; that course we followed for a day, then on the morrow we worked round toward the north, and finally to the west again, as we neared home. Thus the trapping path was laid in an elliptic form, somewhat suggesting the letter C, with the home camp between the two ends of the letter. Many times during the winter circumstances proved the wisdom of Oo-koo-hoo's plan, especially when the sled became overloaded with game, and a short cut to camp became desirable. Though no part of his fur path lay more than five miles from the lodges, yet to make the full circuit on shows shoes, to examine the traps, and to set some of them, it required a long day, as the path must have covered in a zig-zagging way more than twenty miles. Later on he and Amik laid out two more such trapping paths: one to the north and the other to the east of Bear Lake. The one to the northward was to be especially for bears and wolves as it was a good region for both those animals. At supper time a snow flurry overtook us and whitened the forest. As we sat around the fire that evening, the last evening of our trip, Oo-koo-hoo again began worrying about the presence of wolverines, recalling many of his experiences with those destructive animals. But none of his stories equalled the following, told once by Chief Factor Thompson.

#### MEGUIR AND THE WOLVERINE

It happened years ago when an old Dog-rib Indian, called Meguir, was living and hunting in the vicinity of Fort Rae on Great Slave Lake. The Dog-rib and his family of five had been hunting Barren Ground Caribou, and after killing, skinning, and cutting up a number of deer, had built a stage upon which they placed the venison. Moving on and encountering another herd of caribou, they killed again, and cutting up the game, stored it this time in a log cache. Again setting out on the hunt—for they were laying in their supply of deer meat for the



winter—they again met with success; but as it was in a district devoid of trees, they simply covered the meat with brush; and while Meguir and his wife set off to haul the first lot of meat to camp, the three grandchildren set to work to haul in the last. On continuing their work the next day the children brought in word that a wolverine, or carcajou, had visited the log cache; so Meguir set off at once to investigate the story.

When he arrived, he found the cache torn asunder, and the meat gone. Wolverine tracks were plentiful and mottled the snow in many directions, but on circling, Meguir found a trail that led away, and on following it up, he came upon a quarter of deer. He circled again, trailed another track, found more meat, and after a few hours' work he had recovered most of the venison; but on smelling it, he found that the wolverine, in its usual loathsome way, had defiled the meat. Then, on going to his stage, Meguir found that it, too, had been visited by the wolverine, as the stage had been torn down and the meat defiled. Indignant at the outrage, the old Dog-rib determined to hunt the carcajou and destroy it. But before doing so, he made sure that all his deer meat was hauled to camp and safely stored upon the stages beside his lodge. That night, however, his old wife woke up with a start and hearing the dogs growling, looked out, and discovered a strange animal scrambling down from one of the stages. At once she screamed to her old man to get his gun as fast as The Master of Life would let him, as the wolverine was robbing them again.

Half-awake, and that half all excitement, the old man rushed out into the snow with his muzzle-loading flintlock and let drive. Instantly one of his dogs fell over. Roaring with rage, the old Indian re-loaded with all speed, and catching another glimpse of the wolverine in the faint light of the Aurora Borealis, let drive again; but as ill-luck would have it, the gun went off just as another of his dogs made a gallant charge, and once more a dog fell dead—and the wolverine got away!

Nothing would now do but that the old man must seek his revenge at the earliest possible moment, so when dawn broke he was already following the trail of the malicious raider. All day he trailed it through the snow, and just before dusk the tracks told him that he was very near his quarry; but rather than run the risk of firing in a poor light, he decided not to despatch the brute until daylight came.

According to the northern custom, when he camped that night, he stood his gun and snowshoes in the snow far enough away to prevent their being affected by the heat of the fire. In the morning his snowshoes were gone. Tracks, however, showed that the wolverine had taken them. Again the old man trailed the thief; but without snowshoes, the going was extra hard, and it was afternoon before he stumbled upon one of his snowshoes lying in the snow, and quite near his former camp, as the "Great Mischief Maker" had simply made a big circuit and come back again. But of what use was one snowshoe? So the old hunter continued his search, and late that day found the other—damaged beyond repair.

That night, filled with rage and despondency, he returned to his old camp, and as usual placed his gun upright in the snow away from the heat of the fire. In the morning it was gone. New tracks marked the snow and showed where the carcajou had dragged it away. Several hours later the old man found it with its case torn to ribbons, the butt gnawed, and the trigger broken.

Tired, hungry, dejected, and enraged, old Meguir sought his last night's camp to make a fire and to rest awhile; but when he got there he found he had lost his fire bag containing his flint and steel—his wherewithal for making fire. Again he went in search, but fresh-falling snow had so obliterated the trail and so hindered his progress, that it was late before he recovered his treasure, and regained his dead fireplace. Yet still the wolverine was at large.

But instead of thinking of wreaking his rage upon the wolverine, the poor old Indian was so completely intimidated by the wily brute, so discouraged and so despondent, that he imagined that the whole transaction was the work of some evil spirit. As a result, he not only gave up hunting the wolverine, but he gave up hunting altogether, and he and his family would have starved had not friends come to their rescue and rendered them assistance until his grandsons were old enough to take charge.

#### PREPARING FOR WINTER

After our return to the home-camp we experienced several weeks of perfect Indian summer, and its passing was marked by one of the most beautiful natural phenomena I have ever seen. It happened when the deciduous trees were at their height of autumnal glory, and when—as though to add still more to the wonderful scene—three inches of clinging snow having fallen during the night, glittered under the brilliant morning sun. Truly it was a glory to behold—a perfect panorama of rioting greens, yellows, browns, blues, reds, grays, crimsons, purples, in fact, every colour which an artist's palette could carry; and through it all was ever woven a mass of lace-like brilliant white that dazzled the eyes of the beholder. Only once in fifty years have I beheld a scene so enchanting.

Next day, however, a strong wind blew wild-looking leaden clouds over the forest, and Autumn, taking fright, threw aside her gorgeous rustling mantle and fled away; while the loons on the lake fairly shrieked with laughter.

Meanwhile, the work in preparation for the coming of winter had made good progress. Already the women and children had laid out their own little trapping paths—principally for ermine, rabbits, partridges, muskrats, and skunks, the game found nearest camp; and many another thing had the women attended to. Though they still possessed the sticking-plaster



and the painkiller supplied by the trader, they refused to rely on the white man's trivial cure-alls, as they could gather better remedies from their own woods. Their chief reason for buying "painkiller" was that they, like other Indians, relished it as a cocktail on festival occasions; and many a time have I seen a group of Indians—like civilized society people—topping off cocktails (of painkiller) before sitting down to dinner.

In case of illness, however, the Indians resort much to bleeding, and this is the mode of operation: a sharp flint is fastened to the split end of a stick, a U-shaped piece of wood is laid over the intended spot, and the thickness of the wood determines the depth of the incision. The flint end of the stick is raised while the other end is held down in such a way as to bend the stick; on releasing the end containing the flint, the stick strikes downward and drives the flint into the flesh to the required depth and no more. The bowl of a pipe is then applied to the cut, and the blood is drawn off through the stem. Young birch roots boiled in a second water make a tea which they sweeten with sugar and use as a laxative. Yellow water-lily roots are boiled until a black sediment forms—somewhat similar to iodine in appearance—and with a feather dipped in this liquid wounds are painted in order to consume proud flesh and to prevent mortification. The upper tips—about four inches long—of juniper trees having been boiled, and the outer bark removed, the inner bark is scraped off and mashed up for poultices. The liquor in which the juniper has been boiled is employed for washing wounds, as it causes the rapid formation of a healing cicatrix. To cure colic, the dried root of the "rat root" is chewed, and the juice swallowed.

Among other work that was well under way was the making of the moccasins, known as the "mitten moccasin"—by far the best for snowshoeing, as the seam runs round only the outer side of the foot and leaves no puckering above the toes to cause blistering. True, the mitten moccasin is not of the Ojibway

style, but Mrs. Oo-koo-hoo had learned to make it when she and her husband formerly sojourned among the Wood-Crees on the upper Athabasca.

Supplying the family with socks was a very easy affair, as these articles were simply rectangular shapes, 12 x 18 inches (for adults) cut from duffle—a woollen material resembling an extra closely woven H.B.C. blanket—and worn wrapped about the foot. Such socks have an advantage over the ordinary kind as they are more easily dried, and they wear much longer, as the sock can be shifted about every time the wearer puts it on, thus warding off the evil day when holes appear.

Amik, during the summer, had made a number of snowshoe frames, and now the women were lacing them. They used fine caribou thongs, especially fine for the heel and toe. I have seen snowshoes that white men have strung with cord; but cord is of little use, for cord, or rope, shrinks when wet and stretches when dry, whereas deerskin stretches when wet and shrinks when drying. Of all deerskin, however, that of caribou stretches less when wet than any other; besides, it is much stronger and that is why it makes the best mesh for snowshoes. In lacing a shoe, a wooden needle is used, but the eye, instead of being at one end, is in the centre. Amik had also started work on several hunting sleds of the toboggan type—the only kind used by the natives of the Great Northern Forest. They are made of birch wood and not of birch bark, as a noted American author asserted in one of his books on northern life.

A hunting sled is made of two thin boards, split from a birch log by using wooden wedges, and the boards are shaved flat and smooth, first with the aid of a very sharp axe and then with a crooked knife. A hunting sled is ten to twelve inches wide, and commonly eight feet long. The widest part of the sled is at the first cross-bar, then it tapers both ways, an inch less at the tail, and four or five inches less at the end of its gracefully curved prow. That is done to prevent jamming among trees. The

two boards are fastened to four cross-bars with deerskin thongs, never with pegs or nails, and the ground-lashing is made fast to the cross-bars. A wrapper of deerskin is provided in which to lash the load. The lashing thong is eighteen to twenty feet in length. Dog-sleds are made much longer, and up to about sixteen inches in width, and are provided with an extra line that trails out behind, by which the driver holds back the sled when going down hill, in order to prevent it from over-running the dogs. A hunting-sled, however, is usually hauled by man by means of a looped strap, or tump-line, with a broad centre which goes over the hunter's shoulders or head, and has its two ends fastened to the first cross-bar below the prow.

During the next few days Oo-koo-hoo and Amik had also finished setting their traps, snares, and deadfalls for all the furred creatures of the woods, including wolves and bears. Already the camp had taken on a business-like air, for the big stretching frames for the skins of moose, bear, and caribou had been erected near the lodges; and as the hunters had secured both moose and caribou, the frames were already in use. Trapping had begun in earnest, and though fairly successful—a number of fine skins having been already taken—the hunters were still worried over the wolverines. On one path alone they had found nothing but a fox's foot, and the tails of four martens; besides, several of their traps were missing. In another place, where they had dressed a caribou killed by Oo-koo-hoo, and had left the meat overnight for the women and boys to haul in next day, wolverines had found it and defiled it in their usual way.

The women, too, had had their troubles as owls had visited their snares, and robbed them of many a pelt. Worse in some respects than the wolverine is the owl, for while the wolverine leaves a track that one can trail, and either find what is left of the game, or overtake and punish the marauder, the owl leaves no trail at all, and though he frequently eats only the brain or eyes of the game, he has a habit of carrying the game away and



dropping it in the distant woods where it is seldom found. So the women took to setting steel traps on the ends of upright poles upon which they judged the owls would alight, as these birds are much given to resting upon the tips of "ram-pikes," and in that way they had caught several.

One evening early in November, after a hard day's travel through a big storm of wet, clinging snow, we sat by the fire in Oo-koo-hoo's lodge, and happily commented on the fact that we had got everything in good shape for the coming of winter. Next morning, when we went outside, we found that everything was covered with a heavy blanket of clinging snow, and the streams and the lake beginning to freeze over. We found, also, to our amazement that a big bull-moose had been standing on the bank of Muskrat Creek and watching the smoke rising from our lodges as the fires were lighted at sunrise—just as I have shown in my painting.

After a hurried breakfast, we three men set out in pursuit of the moose which we overtook within a mile, and then there was meat to haul on sleds to our camp. That day the temperature fell rapidly, and by night the little streams were strongly frozen, and around the lake the ice stretched far out from the shore. So we gathered up the canoes and stored them for the winter upside down upon stages made for the purpose; and that night before we turned in we saw, for the first time that season, *Akwutinoowe*—"The Freezing Moon."

# IV

## OO-KOO-HOO PLAYS THE GAME

### TRAILING THE BEAR

"My son, a good hunter is never long in doubt; for when he discovers a bear track and follows it for a few hundred paces, he knows whether the track was made by day or by night, whether the bear was large or small, old or young, male or female; whether its coat was in condition or not; whether the beast was merely wandering or travelling with a purpose in view; whether it was frightened or undisturbed; whether going fast or slow; and whether seeking friends or food. Also, the hunter knows which way the wind was blowing when the track was made, he knows whether the bear felt tired or active, and, furthermore, whether or not it wanted to go to bed."

I laughed aloud.

Instantly the old man's kindly face was clouded with a frown and he exclaimed:

"My son . . . that was the laugh of a *monias* (green-horn)", and glaring at me, he added: "At first, I thought better of you, but now I am sure that all white men are fools!"

Realizing my mistake, I sobered, and suggested that if he would explain I would have a chance to learn the ways of a great hunter.

"My son, it is a simple matter to read a track—that is, when one has learned the game. For then one has but to look, remember, and reason, and then the whole story unfolds before

your eyes; just as when you open and read what you white men call a book. And some day, my son, if you try hard to learn, you, too, may be able to read the tales of the Strong Woods Country. Now listen to your grandfather and he will explain: under ordinary conditions a deep, clear track implies action; a faint, shallow one, inaction; the length of the stride indicates the speed; if, when travelling slow, hair is found upon the underwood, the animal passed at night, for in daylight a bear is as careful as a lynx to avoid striking things; if the bear is young or middle aged, the claw marks are sharp and clean cut; if it is old, they are blunt and blurred. The tracks of the male, though larger, are not so round as those of the female, and the male's toes are not only longer and spread farther apart, but the underside of his foot is not so hairy as that of his mate. Then, too, as you know, there are other signs by which a tracker tells the sex of his quarry. Now if the bear was travelling with a definite purpose in mind, he would travel straight, or as nearly straight as he could through the woods, and in order to save time, he might even occasionally climb a tree to spy out the lay of the land—as he frequently does. Then, again, if he were feeding, the ground and growth beside his trail would show it; if suddenly startled, he would leave the familiar sign that all large animals usually leave when frightened; and, moreover, it would be left within fifty paces of the place where he took fright. Furthermore, if he were tired and wanted to rest, he would begin circling down wind, so that he could come about close to his back trail, and then lie down, facing down wind, in such a position that he could see anything he could not scent, and scent anything he could not see. Thus if an enemy approached, his eyes would guard his front while his scent would guard his rear. And now, my son, as a bear usually travels up wind, even a *monias* of a white man could surmise which way the wind was blowing when the track was made. And always remember, my son, that only fools laugh at common sense.



But don't get discouraged, keep on trying hard to learn, and then perhaps some day, if you live long enough, you may become almost as wise as an ordinary Indian."

The perfect season for hunting the black bear, and in fact all other fur-bearing animals, is between the coming of the snow in late autumn and the going of the snow in early spring, for during that intervening season the coat is in its prime; but as the bear spends much of the winter in hibernation, the hunter must make the best of his two short opportunities; that is, unless he already knows where the bear will "den up," and is counting on killing him in his *o-wazhe*—or as the white hunters and traders call it "wash"—his den. His wash may consist of a hollow tree or a hollow log, a cave, or any suitable shelter formed by an uprooted tree.

The finest wash I ever saw was in the woods of Quebec, where, many years ago, three birch saplings had taken root in a huge, hollow pine stump, and where, as time passed, the stump, gradually decaying, had allowed the roots of the fast-growing birches to penetrate through the cracks in the stump to the ground. The roots eventually formed the rafters of a moss-and rotten-wood chinked, water-tight roof to the little cavern in which the old pine stump had once stood and where two winters ago slept a bear. There was but a single entrance between two of the now massive birch roots, and it must have proved a tight squeeze when its tenant last entered. The den was shown to me by a hunter who the spring before had happened that way. While pausing to listen to some distant sound, he had heard a stranger one within ten feet of where he stood. He had heard deep breathing and turning to look down at the roots of the birches, he had discovered a full-grown black bear lying there with its head protruding out of the den. The head was turned toward him and the eyes were fixed upon him with a friendly expression. Without moving a single step the hunter raised his rifle and fired, instantly killing

the bear that lay motionless scarcely beyond the muzzle of his gun.

#### THE TRUTH ABOUT BEARS

The black bear's coat is all of a glossy black, save just the muzzle, which is light brown. In weight the black bear runs from two hundred to five hundred pounds. Though he is found throughout the Great Northern Forest, he is a comparative stay-at-home, for he seldom roams, even in summer time, more than ten miles from his den, where, if undisturbed, he goes into the same winter quarters, year after year. Consequently, his paths are often clearly defined and well-beaten, for he has the habit of treading repeatedly in his old tracks, and occasionally he blazes his trail by clawing and biting, as high as he can reach, a neighbouring tree. There, too, he frequently leaves other signs—as a dog does at a post. Dog-like, also, other bears that happen along manifest pleasure or rage according to whether the sign has been left by friend or foe. The mating season is in June, though the female rarely bears young except every second year. The young are born in January while the mother is hibernating; and the cubs, usually two in number, are at birth very small, weighing only about ten ounces. The she-bear makes a good mother, for though she shows great affection for her babies, she nevertheless reprimands them, and cuffs them as well, whenever they misbehave or fail to comply with her wishes. The cubs are easily tamed, and being natural little romps, they soon become proficient wrestlers and boxers, and in latter years, show so much agility in the manly art that they strike and parry with amazing power, speed, and skill. When hurt, however, the cubs whimper and cry just like children, and if the little tots are badly wounded, the distress of the mother is pitiful to see, for she moans and sheds tears just as any tender-hearted human mother would. Bear-cubs are droll little mischiefs. Not only

do they, when tamed, frequently get into trouble through the pranks they play, but they like to imitate at any risk to themselves the doings of others. As the following example shows:

Years ago, near Fort Pelly, on the Assiniboine River, an old Indian killed a she-bear that was followed by two cubs. Though he skinned and cut up the carcass of the mother, he did not touch the whimpering babes, and on going to camp, he sent his wife out with a horse to bring in the meat. When the Indian woman arrived at the spot, she found the two cubs cuddled up against the dressed meat of their mother, and crying as if their poor hearts would break. Their affectionate behaviour so touched the motherly heart of the old woman that, after loading the meat aboard the *travois*—a framework of poles stretched out behind the horse—she picked up the sobbing children and, wrapping them in a blanket to keep them from falling off the *travois*, bestrode her horse, and brought them whimpering into camp.

For some time she kept them tethered beside her lodge where she took good care of them, but when they grew larger and seemed well behaved, she released them and allowed them to run and play with the dogs around camp. In the fall it was her habit to take a hand-net and go down to the river to fish. Standing upon a rock and every once in a while casting in her net, she would land a fish on the bank. For several days the cubs watched her with interest, and then one day, it seems, they decided they ought to try and help their foster-mother; so wading in on their hind legs till the water covered their little round tummies, they would stand perfectly still until a fish would swim near. Then they would make a violent lunge for it, and striking lightning-like blows with their paws, they, too, would land a fish upon the bank. Over and over they repeated the manœuvre, with evident excitement and pleasure. At last, every time the old woman picked up her net to go fishing, these two went along and helped her with her work. So fond



of the sport did they become that, presently, they didn't even wait for her to accompany them, but scurried down to the river by themselves and would often have a day's fishing caught and ready for her before she had put in her appearance.

But a few months later, when the cubs had grown still larger and stronger, they became so boisterous and mischievous that they not only handled the dogs too roughly, but when the old Indian and his wife left camp at any time, they went on the rampage: chasing the dogs about, ransacking the larder, turning the camp topsy-turvy, and scattering everything in confusion. So the old couple decided that it was now high time to put their skins upon the skin-stretcher in readiness to sell to the fur-trader.

The black bear is a good swimmer and an excellent tree climber, and the speed with which he can rush up a hillside is surprising. His diet is a varied one, for he is always ready to eat vegetables, roots, berries, insects, nuts, fish, eggs, meat, fruit, and of course sugar or honey; furthermore, he is a killer of small game—when he is extra-hungry. The black bear has been given so bad a name by uninformed writers and dishonest story-tellers that most people dread to meet him in the woods; whereas, in truth he is usually more frightened at meeting human beings than they are of meeting him—for man is always his greatest and most dangerous enemy. Though I have seen many bears in the bush—seventeen on one trip—they never caused me any anxiety, and at once took flight. But on one of two rare occasions they did not run, perhaps because they were three in number and all full-grown.

It happened up on the borderline of Alaska. I was walking alone through the mountains on my way to Stewart, and wishing to cross the Marmot River, I took advantage of a great, permanent snowslide that had been annually added to by avalanches from the snow-capped glaciers. The snowslide not only completely blocked the cañon, but on either side it

reached many hundreds of feet up the almost perpendicular mountains, yet in the middle, where it bridged the river, it was no more than two hundred feet high, though it was about two thousand feet in width. Year in and year out that great snow-bridge spanned the little river, and now when I wanted to make use of it, I had no sooner started over than I discovered three bears with the same intention. They, too, had just come out of the woods, and were only forty paces from me—as I afterward measured. We were all going in the same direction, and though we were exactly opposite one another and all walking in a parallel line, no one ran, and for two thousand feet or more, without stick or stone between us, we had a good opportunity to study each other. As usual, I was armed—as I always take care to be—with a penknife and a pocket handkerchief.

Occasionally one reads in the daily press shocking stories of the ferocity of bears. What a pity that the truth of these stories cannot always be run to earth! Billy Le Heup, a prospector and guide of northern Ontario, once having occasion to call for his mail in a little backwoods settlement, opened a newspaper and was shocked to learn that a most harrowing affliction had befallen an old friend of his, by name—But I'm sorry I have forgotten it, so let us call him Jones. The paper reported that while several of Jones's children were out berry-picking, a great, black bear had attacked them, and killing the youngest, a little girl, had devoured her entirely, save only one tiny fragment; for when the rescue party went in search of the poor little child they found nothing but her blood-stained right hand. Le Heup was so overcome with sorrow and so filled with indignation that he then and there determined to get together a few trapper friends of his and at once start by canoe for the scene of the tragedy, only a few miles away; there to condole with the poor father, trail the huge brute and wreak vengeance upon the child-eating monster. So Bill, with several

of the best bear-hunters in that region, all well armed, set out in haste for the Jones's clearing. When they arrived, Jones was splitting wood outside his shack. The sorrowing trappers, with downcast eyes, moved slowly toward the bereaved father, and Le Heup, appointed spokesman, offered their condolences on the terrible death of his favourite child. Jones was completely dumbfounded. When it was explained to him what a dreadful thing had happened to his child, he swore he had no idea a bear had ever eaten any one of his children; but he was willing to put their story to the proof, so as he had a lot of children, he called them all out of the house to check them over. To the joyful surprise of the visitors, there among them was little Eva—supposed to be eaten, and she even retained her right hand. Thus another newspaper libel upon the poor old black bear—the buffoon of the forest—was shown to be devoid of truth; yet that story was published in the Toronto papers, and, no doubt, was copied all over the United States.

But though the black bear is a shy, playful brute, usually ready for flight if danger approaches, the tyro should remember that if wounded or cornered he will readily fight. Furthermore, if one is unlucky enough to get between a bear cub and its mother, and if the cub should cry out as though you were giving it pain, the mother will attack you as readily as any mother would—be she chicken, moose, or woman.

#### THE WAYS OF THE BEAVER

A few days later Oo-koo-hoo and Amik set out to hunt beavers—those wonderful amphibious animals of the Northland that display more intelligence, perseverance, prudence, and morality than many a highly civilized human being.

In appearance the beaver somewhat resembles a greatly magnified muskrat, save that the beaver's hairless, scaly tail is very broad and flat. The coat of the beaver is brown, and



the darker the colour the higher the price it brings. An adult beaver may measure from thirty-five to forty-five inches in length, and weigh anywhere from thirty to sixty pounds. The beaver's home is usually in the form of an island house, built in the waters of a small lake or slowly running stream, to afford protection from prowling enemies, much in the same way that the old feudal lords surrounded the ramparts of their castles with broad moats and flooded the intervening space with a deep canal of water, in order to check the advance of enemy raiders. The surrounding shores of the beaver's castle are nearly always wooded with poplars, as it is upon the bark of that tree that the beaver depends most for his food; though at times, other hardwoods contribute to his feast as well as water-lily roots and other vegetation.

The beaver's island-like lodge is a dome-shaped structure that rises from four to seven feet above the water, and measures from ten to thirty feet in diameter on the water-line. It is composed mostly of barkless sticks and poles from one to four inches in diameter, although at times much heavier material is used; and it is tightly chinked with stones and mud and matted vegetation. Frequently, I have watched the building of their lodges. A foundation of water-logged poles and sticks is laid upon the lake or river bottom, next mud and stones are added, then another lot of branches, thus the structure rises in a fairly solid mound until its dome-like top reaches the desired height above the water-line. Then the beavers tunnel their two runways into the centre of the mass from an under-water level on the outside to an over-water level on the inside of the mound. Next, by gnawing away the inside sticks and excavating the inner mass, the inside chamber is formed, measuring anywhere from four to fourteen feet in width, and a little over two feet in height, with its walls finished fairly smooth. Furthermore, the chamber is provided with two floors each of which covers about half the room. While the lower

floor rises from three to six inches above the water level, the upper floor rises from four to eight inches above the lower floor. The tunnels open in the lower floor and it is the lower floor or level that is used as a drying place and a dining room. The upper level, covered with a mattress of shredded wood, grass, or moss, forms the living and sleeping half of the chamber. Though in winter time most of their meals are eaten in the house, the green, bark-covered sticks being brought into the chamber through the straightest tunnel, the house is kept quite clean and free of all rubbish or filth. In fact, beavers are better housekeepers than some human beings I have known.

A certain amount of ventilation is derived from a few little chinks in the apex of the roof. During the first freezing nights of late fall the beavers plaster the above-water dome of their house with mud which they carry up between their forelegs and chin from the lake bottom, and placing it upon the roof of their house, spread it about in a thick coating, not with their tails, but with their forefeet, where it soon freezes into so solid a mass that it protects the inmates from the attacks of both the severest winter weather and the most savage of four-footed enemies. So strong indeed does the roof then become that even a moose could stand upon it without it giving way. While some writers doubt that beavers plaster the outside of their house with mud, I wish to add that I have not only examined their houses before and after the plastering was done, but on several moonlight nights I have actually sat within forty feet of them and watched them do it.

The winter supply of food, being mostly poplar bark, is derived from the branches of green trees which the beavers cut down in the autumn for that very purpose. While engaged in gnawing down trees the beavers usually work in pairs—one cutting while the other rests and also acts as a sentinel to give warning in case an enemy approaches. While cutting down trees they stand or sit in an upright position upon their hind



legs and are firmly supported by the tripod formed by the spreading out of their hind feet and tail. They generally choose trees nearest the water on an inclined bank, and usually leaning toward the stream; and while they show no particular skill in felling trees in a certain position, they do display great perseverance, for if it happens, as it sometimes does, that a tree in its descent is checked and eventually held up by its neighbours, the beavers will cut the trunk for the second time, and in some cases even for the third time, in order to bring it down.

At night I have frequently sat by the hour at a time, with the brush-screened bow of my canoe within ten feet of a party of beavers, while they were busily engaged in cutting the branches off a tree that they had felled into the water the previous evening. They work quickly, too, for some mornings I have paddled past a big tree lying in the water, which they had dropped the night before and—on returning next day—have found all the branches removed, though some of them would have measured five inches in diameter. But watching beavers work at night is not only interesting, it is easy to do, and I have frequently taken both women and children to share in the sport. Sometimes, right in the heart of the wilderness, I have placed children within fifteen feet of beavers while they were engaged in cutting up a tree.

When branches measure from one to three inches in diameter they are usually cut in lengths of from five to ten feet, and the thicker the branch the shorter they cut the lengths. If the cutting is done on land, the butt of the long thinner length is seized by the beaver's teeth and with the weight resting upon the animal's back, is dragged along the ground—over a specially cleared road—and eventually deposited in the water. The shorter lengths, sometimes no longer than a couple of feet, but measuring perhaps six or eight inches in diameter, are rolled along the ground by the beaver pushing the log with the fore-feet or shoulder. When the wood is placed in the water, the



beaver propels it to its under-water storage place near its lodge, where—the wood being green and heavy—it is easily secured from floating up and away, by placing a little mud over one end or by interlocking the stick with the rest of the pile. The green wood, however, soon becomes waterlogged and gives no further trouble. Thus, when the lake or river is frozen over, the beaver—for it does not hibernate—may live in comfort all winter long in its weather-proof lodge with plenty of food stored beneath the ice and just beyond the watery doorway of its home.

#### HUNTING THE BEAVER

The hunters, arriving at a small lake that lay about three miles to the northwest of Bear Lake, crossed it, and turning up a winding creek, followed the little river until they came to a beaver dam which caused the stream to expand into another little lake that flooded far beyond its old water-line. In it was to be seen three beaver lodges.

Oo-koo-hoo said the scene was somewhat altered since he had visited it four years before, as the dam had been increased both in height and length, and the pond, increasing, too, had reached out close to many a tree that formerly stood some distance from the water. It was a beautiful little mere containing a few spruce-crowned islands, and surrounded by thickly wooded hills whose bases were well fringed with poplars, birches, willows, and alders—an ideal home for beaver. Among the little islands stood three snow-capped beaver lodges. Here and there wide-spreading, wind-packed carpets of snow covered the ice, while in between big stretches of clear, glassy ice, acting as skylights, lit up the beavers' submarine gardens around their ice-locked homes.

The hunters were accompanied by three of their dogs, and before they had time to decide where they should first begin work, the dogs began barking at a point between the west lodge

and the bank; so they went over to investigate. Evidently the dogs had spied a beaver, for now, though none was in sight, the canines were rushing back and forth in great excitement over a fairly deep submarine runway or clear passageway, through the shallow, rush-matted water under the ice.

Chopping a hole through the ice with his axe, Oo-koo-hoo drove down a couple of crossed poles to block the passageway, and Amik, finding other runways, did likewise at other places. Several of the passageways led to the bank, where, Oo-koo-hoo said, they had what is called "bank lodges"—natural cavities in the river bank to which the beavers had counted on resorting in case their house was raided. In other places, where the snow obscured the view, the Indians knocked on the ice with the backs of their axes, to find and follow the hollow-sounding ice that told of runways below, that other stakes might be driven down. The rapping sound, however, instead of driving the beavers out of their lodge, had a tendency to make them remain at home, for as Oo-koo-hoo explained, cutting ice and working around their homes does not always frighten the beavers.

Securing two stouter poles, the hunters now chopped the butts into wedge-shaped chisels, with which they proposed to break open the beavers' lodge. Work was begun about a foot above the level of the snow on the south side, as they explained that the lodge would not only be thinner on that side, but that the sun would make it slightly softer, too—and before much headway was made the dogs, all alert, discovered that several of the beavers had rushed out of their house, but finding the passageways blocked had returned home.

Now, strange to say, as soon as the side of the house was broken open and daylight let in, the beavers, becoming curious over the inflowing light that dazzled their eyes, actually came toward the newly made hole to investigate. Then Oo-koo-hoo, with the aid of a crooked stick, suddenly jerked one of the unsuspecting animals out of the hole and Amik knocked it on the

head. Thus they secured four large ones, but left a number of smaller ones unharmed, as Oo-koo-hoo never made a practice of taking a whole family.

In that house the portion of the chamber used for sleeping quarters was covered with a thick mattress of dry "snake-grass," and the whole interior was remarkably clean. After blocking and patching up the hole and covering the place with snow, the hunters threw water over it until it froze into a solid mass, then they removed the stakes from the runways and left the rest of the beavers in peace. Loading their catch upon their toboggans, all set out for home.

#### BEAVER DAMS AND CANALS

Besides erecting their remarkably strong houses there are two other ways in which the beavers display wonderful skill: in the building of their dams and in the excavating of their canals. Their dams are built for the purpose of retarding, raising, and storing water, in order—in summer time—to circumvent their enemies by placing a well-watered moat between their foe and their castle; also to flood a wider area so that the far-reaching waters of their pond may lap close to the roots of many otherwise inaccessible trees and thus enable them to fell and float them to their lodge; and—in winter time—to raise the water high enough to secure their pond from freezing solid and imprisoning them in their lodges where they would starve to death, or if they gnawed their way to freedom, the intense cold of mid-winter would freeze their hairless tails and cause their death; furthermore, should they escape from the weather, they would be at the mercy of all their enemies and would not long survive.

A dam, in the beginning, is usually erected in a small way, just to raise and expand the waters of some small creek or even those of a spring; then, as the years go by, it is constantly added



to, to increase the depth and expansion of the pond, and thus the dam grows from a small one of a few yards in length to a big one of several hundred feet—sometimes to even four or five hundred feet in length—that may bank up the water four or five feet above the stream just outside the dam, and turn the pond into a great reservoir covering hundreds of acres of land.

The dam is more often built of branches laid parallel to the current with their butts pointing up stream, and weighted down with mud and stones; thus layer after layer is added until the structure rises to the desired height and strength. Some dams contain hundreds of tons of material. They are usually built upon a solid bottom, not of rock—though big, stationary boulders often are included in the construction for the extra support they furnish. When thus used, boulders often cause the beavers to divert the line of the dam out of its usual graceful and scientific curve that well withstands the pressure from even a large body of water.

The beavers excavate canals—sometimes hundreds of feet in length—to enable them to reach more easily and float home the wood they have cut from freshly felled trees lying far beyond the reaches of their pond. The canals measure from two to three feet in width and a foot to a foot and a half in depth, and are not only surprisingly clean-cut and straight but occasionally they are even provided with locks, or rather little dams, to raise the water from one level to another—generally about a foot at a time—to offset the disadvantage of the wood lying on higher and more distant ground than is reached by the waters of the residential pond. Sometimes their canals are fed by springs, but more often by the drainage of rainwater. The building of many of their dams and canals displays remarkable skill and a fine sense of engineering, together with a spirit of perseverance that is astounding. Is it any wonder that the Indians say that the beavers were once human beings, whom, for the punishment of some miscon-

duct, The Master of Life condemned to get down and grovel upon the ground as four-footed animals for the rest of their days.

"Yes, my son," replied Oo-koo-hoo, when we were discussing beavers, "they are a very clever and a very wise people, and it would be better for us if we emulated them more than we do, for as you know, they believe in not talking but in working and making good use of the brains The Master of Life has given them, and that is the only way to be really happy in this world. Besides, he is always true to his wife—a fine example to men—furthermore, he is a good provider who looks after his children, and is a decent, clean-living fellow who never goes out of his way to quarrel with any one, but just minds his own business and cuts wood."

Could any nation choose a creature more fit for a national emblem? I believe not. For would any wise man compare a useless, screeching eagle, or a useless, roaring lion—each a creature of prey—to a silent, hard-working, and useful beaver who remains true to his wife all his life, who builds a comfortable home for his children, provides them well with food and teaches them . . . not how to kill other creatures . . . but how to work, . . . how to construct strong, comfortable houses, how to build dams to protect, not only their children, but their homes, too, how to chop down trees for food, how to dig canals to float the food home, how to store it for the winter, how to keep the home clean and in good order, how to mind their own business and never seek a quarrel, and, at the same time, how to defend themselves desperately if an enemy attacks them.

For his size, the beaver is powerful, so powerful, indeed, that Oo-koo-hoo said: "Remember, my son, the beaver is a very strong animal, he can drag a man after him, and the only way for a hunter to hold him—if he is caught in a trap—is to lift him off his feet."

Notwithstanding his great strength, however, he is a peace-loving chap, but when a just occasion arises, you ought to see him fight!

#### BEAVER FIGHTS WOLVERINE

One spring while hunting along a river, some years ago, Oo-koo-hoo discovered a beaver at work upon the bank, and wishing to observe him for a while, kept perfectly still. The beaver was cutting poplar sticks to take them through a hole in the ice to the under-water entrance of his near-by home for his family to feed upon. But presently Oo-koo-hoo discovered another moving object; it was a wolverine, and it was stalking the beaver. When it drew near enough to the unsuspecting worker, it made a sudden spring and landed upon his back. A desperate fight ensued. The wolverine was trying to cut the spinal cord at the back of the beaver's neck; but the short, stout neck caused trouble, and before the wolverine had managed it, the beaver, realizing that the only chance for life was to make for the water-hole, lunged toward it, and with the wolverine still on his back, dived in. On being submerged, the wolverine let go and swam around and around in an effort to get out; but the beaver, now in his element, took advantage of the fact, and rising beneath the foe, leaped at it, and with one bite of his powerful, chisel-like teeth, gripped it by the throat, then let go and sank to watch it bleed to death. A little later, the beaver had the satisfaction of seeing old Oo-koo-hoo walk off with the wolverine's skin.

No . . . beavers do not believe in divorce . . . and on their wedding day—usually in February—they promise to be true to each other for the rest of their lives, and, moreover, unlike many human beings, they keep their promise. About three months later the husband, seeing his wife is getting ready to welcome new relations, leaves his comfortable home just to be out of the way, and takes up new quarters in a hole



in the river bank. While he is there the children—any number from one to six—arrive, and then can be heard much gentle whimpering, just as though human babies were now living in the old homestead.

When the beaver children grow older they romp in the water much as puppies do on land. If danger approaches, the first beaver to sense it slaps the surface of the water with his broad, powerful tail, making a noise that resounds through the forest as though a strong man had struck the water a violent blow with the broad side of a paddle blade. Instantly the first beaver's nearest companion signals the danger to others by doing the same; then a second later they plunge out of sight in the water and leave behind nothing but a great sound—as though an elephant had fallen in.

When married and settled down, the beaver is very domestic—a great stay-at-home—but when seeking a mate, he travels far and wide, and leaves here and there along the shore scent signals, in the hope of more easily attracting and winning a bride. Beavers are full grown at three years of age, and by that time they have learned how to erect houses, build dams, dig canals, chop down trees, cut up wood, float it home and store it for the winter, and by that time too, they have, no doubt, learned that man is their worst enemy, though the wolverine, wolf, otter, lynx, and fisher are ever ready to pounce upon them whenever a chance offers.

#### USEFULNESS OF BEAVER

But I had almost forgotten that I owed the reader an explanation when I said that the beaver was a very useful creature. I was not thinking of the value of his fur, because that is as nothing compared to the great service he has been rendering mankind, not only to-day, but for endless generations. How? By the great work he has been doing during the past

hundreds and thousands of years. How? By going into rocky, useless valleys and building the dams that checked the rushing rivers that were constantly robbing much rich soil from the surrounding country and carrying it down and out to sea. And his dams, moreover, not only held up those treacherous highway-men, but took the loot from them and let it settle in the valleys, where, as years rolled on, it grew and grew into endless great expansions of level meadow lands that now afford much of the most fertile farming soil to be found in North America; and thus the great industry of those silent workers, who lived ages and ages ago, is even to-day benefiting mankind. And thus, too, that great work is being steadily carried on by the living beavers of to-day. Could any country in the world have chosen a more inspiring creature than Canada has chosen for her national symbol?

When, on his fall and spring expeditions, Oo-koo-hoo was hunting beavers with the waters free of ice, he placed steel traps in their runways, either just below the surface of the water, or on the bank; and the only bait he used in both cases was the rubbing of castorum on near-by bushes. Also, he built deadfalls much like those he built for bear, but of course much smaller; and again the bait was castorum, but this time it was rubbed on a bit of rabbit skin which was then attached to the bait stick of the deadfall. The deadfalls he built for beavers were nearly always made of dead tamarack—never of green poplar—otherwise the beavers would have pulled them to pieces for the sake of the wood.

Further, Oo-koo-hoo told me that in the spring he sometimes broke open beaver dams and set traps near the breaks in order to catch the beavers when they came to repair the damage. Such a mode of trapping was, he said, equally successful whether or not there was ice upon the water. He also told me that he had seen other Indians catch beaver with a net made of No. 10 twine, with a three-and-a-half-inch mesh, but that,

though the method worked rather well, he had never tried it. The way of all others, that he liked best, was to hunt them by calling, and the best time for that was during the mornings and evenings of the rutting season.

Later in the year, when the ice is gone, and the beaver is swimming, say a foot under water, the hunter can easily follow his course from the appearance of the surface. The same applies to the muskrat, mink, and otter. Muskrats and beavers swim much alike, as they are usually going in search of roots, and, knowing exactly where to find them, they swim straight; but minks and otters swim a zig-zag course for the reason that they are always looking for fish and therefore are constantly turning their heads about; and that rule applies whether their heads are above or below the surface.

When a beaver—providing he has not slapped the water with his tail—or an otter dives, an observant hunter can judge fairly well as to where the animal is heading for, by simply noting the twist of the tail, a point that helps the hunter to gauge the place where it may rise. The same applies to whales when they sound, though I found—while whale hunting—that few whalers realized it, and fewer still took advantage of it, for much time was lost while waiting for the whale to rise before the boat could be headed in the right direction. But then the average Indian is much more observant than the average white man.

If a beaver is caught in a steel trap, he will do his utmost to plunge into water and remain there even though he should drown, yet his house may not be in that river or pond; but if he is wounded, he will either try to reach his house or take to the woods.

When in pursuit of beavers it is advisable to watch for them on moonlight nights about eight or nine o'clock, and it is best to be in a canoe, as then there is less danger of the beaver sinking before he can be removed from the water. The hunter, while waiting for a shot, makes a noise with the handle of his



knife against a stick in imitation of a beaver cutting wood—a sound somewhat similar to that of the boring of a large auger. It is astonishing how far, on a still night, beavers will hear such a sound and come to help their friends at work. When Oo-koo-hoo shot beaver he charged his gun with four slugs and fired for the head, as he explained that ordinary shot was too fine and scattered too much, while a single ball was too large.

## OO-KOO-HOO SHOOTS A BEAR

The following morning Oo-koo-hoo and I set out to go the round of the northern trapping trail which for some distance followed the valley of Beaver River, upon the bank of which traps, snares, and deadfalls for bears were set. Along that section of the river there were also traps set for otters, beavers, and muskrats; but the hunting of these amphibious animals was pursued with more diligence in the spring than in the winter. Though we hauled a hunting toboggan, the snow was not yet deep enough for snowshoes, but what a feast of reading the forest afforded us! What tragedies were written in the snow! Here we followed a mink's track as it skirted the river bank that wound in and out among the trees, showing that the mink had leaped here, crouched there, or had been scratching beyond in the snow. Evidently it was in search of food. Presently we noticed another track, that of an ermine. The two trails were converging. Now, apparently, the mink had seen its enemy, and, therefore, in order to get past the ermine and escape trouble, it had increased its speed. At this point the ermine had spied it and had redoubled its speed. Now they had both bounded along with all their might. But as ill-fate would have it, they had met. A violent struggle had ensued. Blood was spattered upon the snow. From the battle-ground only one trail led away. It was that of the ermine. But though the snow was marked by the footprints

of only one animal, the trail of two tails plainly showed. It was evident that the ermine had seized its victim by the throat and throwing it over its back, had carried it away. Many other tracks of beasts and birds were printed upon the snow and told in vivid detail stories of life in the winter wilderness.

Beaver River was now frozen firmly enough to bear a man, except in a few places where rapid water kept the ice thin or left the stream open; and as we tramped along we examined a number of traps, from two of which we took an otter and a beaver. But the bear and the wolf traps remained undisturbed though we saw a number of wolf tracks near at hand. Turning westward we ascended a slope and came suddenly upon the fresh track of a bear. It was fairly large, and was travelling slowly; merely sauntering along as though looking for a den in which to pass the winter.

At once Oo-koo-hoo was all alert. Carefully re-charging his gun with ball, and seeing that his knife and axe were at hand, he left the toboggan behind, lest it make a noise among the trees and alarm the quarry. In less than a quarter of a mile, however, we came upon a sign that the bear had passed but a few minutes before. The hunter paused to suggest that it would better his approach if I were to follow a little farther in the rear; then he noiselessly continued his pursuit. Slowly he moved forward, cautiously avoiding the snapping of a twig or the scraping of underbrush. After peering through the shrubbery ahead or halting a moment to reexamine the track, he would move on again, but with scarcely any perceptible motion of the upper part of his body. When in doubt, he would stand stock-still and try by sight or hearing to get news of the bear. Luckily, there was no wind, so it made little difference which way we turned in following the trail. But just then there happened a disturbing and irritating thing, for a whiskey jack—Canada Jay—took to following us, and chirping about it, too. Crossing a rocky patch on the hillside, the bear



Next morning we found that everything was covered with a heavy blanket of clinging snow, and the streams and the lake beginning to freeze over. We found, also to our amazement that a big bull moose had been standing on the bank of Muskral Creek and watching the smoke rising from our lodges as the fires were lighted at sunrise. After a hurried breakfast, we set out in pursuit of the moose, which we

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came into view as it circled a little in order to descend. Presently it left the shadow of the forest and emerging into sunlight on a snow-covered ledge, turned its head as though it had heard a sound in the rear. It was Oo-koo-hoo speaking:

"Turn your head away, my brother . . ." but the report of his gun cut short his sentence, and the bear, leaping forward, disappeared among the growth below. Re-loading his gun, the hunter slowly followed, more cautiously than ever, for he saw from the blood upon the snow that the beast was wounded and, therefore, dangerous. As he went he covered every likely place with his gun, lest the bear should be lurking there and rush at him. At last I saw him pause much longer than usual, then move forward again. Finally he turned, and in a satisfied tone exclaimed: "It's dead!"

The ball had struck just behind the left shoulder and had entered the heart; and the hunter explained that when he saw his best chance, he spoke to the bear to make it pause in order to better his aim.

"And what did you say to him?"

"My son, I said: 'Turn your eyes away, my brother, for I am about to kill you.' I never care to fire at a bear without first telling him how sorry I am that I need his coat."

Then the skinning began, and by noon we had it finished. Loading the head and part of the meat on the sled, I hauled it, while the hunter rolled up the heavy pelt and packed it upon his back with the aid of a tump-line. Taking our loads back to the river and caching them there, we continued along the trapping trail.

#### A DEADFALL FOR BEAR

Soon we came to one of the best deadfalls I had ever seen. It was set for bear, and was of the "log-house" kind, with walls nearly six feet high, and a base that was eight feet long by five feet wide in front, while only two feet in width in the

rear. It was built in conjunction with two standing trees that formed the two corner posts retaining the huge drop-log. The front of the big trap was left quite open, save for the drop-log that crossed it obliquely. While the thin end of the log was staked to the ground, the thick end, loaded with a platform weighted with stones, projected beyond the far side of the trap at a height of about five feet from the ground. It was ready to fall and crush any unlucky creature that might venture in and touch the bait-trigger. Whatever the drop-log might fall upon, it would hold as though in a vise, and if the bear were not already dead when the hunter should arrive, he would take care to shoot the animal in the head before removing the drop-log.

Snares are also set for bears, and the best of them are made of twenty strands of *babiche* twisted into the form of a rope. The loop is set about eighteen inches in diameter, and is attached to either a spring-pole or a tossing-pole—or, more correctly speaking, a tree sufficiently large to raise and support the weight of the bear. Sometimes a guiding-pole is used in connection with a snare. One end is planted in the ground in the centre of the path and the other, slanting up toward the snare, is used as a guide toward the loop, since a bear walking forward would straddle the pole. In a further effort to getting the animal's head in the right place, the hunter smears the upper end of the pole with syrup.

Another wooden trap is that of the stump and wedge. It is made by chopping down a tree of not less than half a foot in diameter, so that a stump is left about six feet high. The stump is then split, and a long, tapering wedge, well greased, is driven in, and upon it is smeared a coating of syrup or honey as a bait. The bear will not only try to lick off the bait, but in his eagerness to pull out the wedge and lick it, too, will spring the trap and find a paw caught between the closing stump. Also, the Indians sometimes use a stage from the top of which



they shoot the bear at night while he passes on his runway; and to attract the bear they imitate the cry of a cub in distress. Steel traps, too, are set for bears. They are very strong with big double springs and weigh about twenty pounds. They, too, are set on the runway of the bears, and are carefully covered with leaves or moss. No bait is used on the trap, but syrup or honey is spread upon a near-by tree to induce the bear to step in the trap.

#### MARASTY AND THE BEAR

But all bear traps are dangerous to mankind and not infrequently a man is caught in one. In 1899 a half-breed hunter by the name of Marasty, who lived near Green Lake, about 150 miles north of Prince Albert, went one late spring day to visit his traps, and in the course of his trip came upon one of his deadfalls set for bear, from which he noticed the bait had been removed, although the trap had not been sprung. Before rebaiting it, however, he built a fire to boil his tea-pail, and sat down to eat his lunch.

After refreshment, Marasty, being a lazy man, decided to enter the trap from in front, instead of first opening up the rear and entering from that quarter, as he should have done. He got along all right until he started to back out, when in some way he jarred the trigger, and, just as he was all free of the ground-log save his right arm, down came the ponderous drop-log with its additional weight of platform and stones. It caught him just above the elbow, crushed his arm flat, and held him a prisoner in excruciating pain. The poor wretch nearly swooned. Later, he thought of his knife. He would try to cut the log in two and thus free himself. He knew that, handicapped as he was, though he worked feverishly and incessantly, the task would demand many hours of furious toil.

After a while the wind arose and re-kindled his dying fire

into life. The sparks flew up and the flames ran over the dry moss toward him. Now there was added the dread of being burnt alive. But he worked his feet violently and succeeded in roughening the ground sufficiently to turn the fire so that it passed on either side of him, and though it continued beyond the wooden trap, eventually died down.

Then he went on with his cutting, but night came on before he had dug into the log more than a few inches. Growing faint, he rested awhile, and later fell asleep. When he awoke, he discovered a full-grown black bear sitting upon its haunches watching him. He shouted to drive the beast away, but, strange to say, the noise did not frighten the bear, for several times it got up and attempted to reach the syrup on the trap. When the captive renewed his shouting and kicking, the bear merely stepped back, sat down, and persisted in maintaining its fearsome watch all night. Nevertheless, the half-breed was afraid to stop shouting, so he kept it up at intervals all night long. When, however, dawn came, the bear went away.

At sunrise Marasty renewed his efforts to escape, and though his hand was now blistered and sore, he worked for several hours. Then thirst attacked him; and he dug in the ground, but without avail, in the hope of finding moisture. Again he turned to the cutting of the log, but soon exhaustion weakened his exertions. Night came on again and with it came the bear; but this time he was glad to see the brute, for its presence made him feel less lonely and drove away despair. This time, too, the bear sat around in such a friendly way, that Marasty felt relieved enough to sing some hymns and do a little praying; but when he began to sing a second time, the big black beast lost patience, got up and walked away, much to the regret of the imprisoned hunter.

In the morning the now almost lifeless Marasty heard in the distance the voice of his brother calling his name; but though he shouted wildly in answer, no response came, for the

wind was blowing in the wrong direction, and defeated his attempt to benefit by the help that was so near. Later, the unhappy man swooned.

About noon the brother, finding the sufferer's trail, arrived upon the scene, removed the drop-log, picked up the unconscious man, and carrying him to his canoe, cut away the thwarts and laid him in. After a paddle of fifteen miles to the portage landing, he left the stricken wretch in the canoe, and ran four miles to get help. With other men and two horses he speedily returned, rigged up a stage swung between the horses, and laying Marasty thereon, transported him through the bush to his home.

In the meantime, an express had been despatched to Prince Albert to summon a doctor; but the old Indian women could not bear to wait so long for the coming of relief, so filing a big knife into a fine-toothed saw, they cut away the bruised flesh and sawed off the broken bones. They made a clean amputation which they dressed with a poultice made from well-boiled inner bark of juniper, and not only did no mortification set in, but the arm healed nicely; and when the doctor arrived ten days later, he examined the amputation carefully and said that there was nothing for him to do: the old women had done their work so well. Marasty quickly recovered, and next winter he was on the hunting trail again.

#### HOW BEARS ARE HUNTED

After spending three days upon the trapping trail we returned to camp; but because our toboggan was loaded with game, and also because we did not return by our outgoing route, the grandmother and the two boys set out to bring in the bear meat and the bear's head. During the feast that followed Oo-koo-hoo addressed the bear's head with superstitious awe and again begged it not to be offended or angry because it had



been killed since they needed both its coat and its fat and flesh to help tide them over the winter. In this entreaty Amik did not join—perhaps because he was too civilized. After the meal, the skull was hung upon a branch of a pine that stood near the lodges. It reminded me that once I had seen at an old camping place eleven bear skulls upon a single branch; but the sight of bear skulls upon trees is not uncommon when one is travelling through the Strong Woods Country.

That night, when I was sitting beside Oo-koo-hoo, we began talking about bear hunting and he said: "My son, some day you, too, may want to become a great bear-hunter, and when you do go out to hunt alone, don't do as I do, but do as I say, for I am growing old and am sometimes careless about the way I approach game." Puffing away at his pipe, he presently continued: "In trailing bear, the hunter's method of approach, of course, depends entirely upon the information he has gained from the tracks he has discovered. If the hunter sees the bear without being seen, he will approach to within about twenty paces or even ten of the brute before he fires; being, however, always careful to keep some object between him and his quarry. And when he does fire, he should not wait to see the effect, but should immediately run aside for a distance of fifteen or twenty paces, as the first thing a bear does when it is shot is to bite the wound on account of the pain, next it tries to discover who hit it, and remembering from which direction the sound came, it looks up, and seeing the smoke, rushes for it. Then the hunter has his opportunity, for on seeing the beast pass broadside, he fires, and thus stands a good chance of hitting a vital spot.

"At a critical moment a good hunter's movements are not only swift but always premeditated. Nor does he ever treat a bear with contempt: from first to last, he is always on guard. He never takes a chance. Even if the bear drops when the hunter fires, he will immediately re-load and advance very

slowly lest the brute be feigning death. The hunter advances, with his gun cocked and in readiness, to within perhaps five paces, and then waits to see if his quarry is really dead. If the bear is not dead and sees that the hunter is off his guard, the chances are it will rush at him. But an experienced hunter is not easily fooled, for he knows that if an animal makes a choking sound in its throat, caused by internal bleeding, it is mortally wounded; but if it makes no such sound—watch out!”

“My son, no animal is ever instantly killed, for there is always a gradual collapse, or more or less of a movement caused by the contraction of its muscles, before death actually comes; but when an animal feigns death, it is always in too much of a hurry about it, and drops instantly without a final struggle, or any hard breathing—that is the time when one should wait and be careful.

“Then again, my son, if a wounded or cornered bear comes suddenly upon a hunter, the beast will not at once rush at him, grab him or bite him, but will instantly draw back, just as the hunter will do; then it will sit up upon its haunches for a moment, as though to think over the situation; that pause, slight as it is, gives the hunter a moment to uncover his gun, cock it, and aim, and fire it at the beast’s mouth. In such a situation the hunter prefers to fire at its mouth, because if shot in the heart, the bear can still lunge at the hunter before it falls, but if struck in the mouth, the brute is dazed and stops to rub its face; meanwhile, the hunter has a chance to re-load and try for a shot behind the ear, as that is even more fatal than one in the heart. But if the bear happens to be in a tree, the hunter does not try for either the brain or the heart, because the former is usually out of aim, and the latter is protected by the trunk or limb of the tree; so he shoots at the small of the back for that will paralyze it and cause it to let go hold of the tree, and drop to the ground. The fall will leave very little

fight in it, or will finish it altogether. But if hit in the head or even in a paw, the chances are that the bear will jump; and then watch out, for it will either run or fight!

“In hunting bears, however, the hunter must remember that he should guard most against scent and sound betraying him, since a bear’s sight is not very keen. If the bear happens to be feeding, the hunter may easily approach, provided that the wind is right and he keeps quiet; but if the bear hears the slightest sound or catches a single whiff of scent—away he goes! If, however, the hunter approaches in an open place and the bear, seeing him, sits up to get a better look, the hunter should immediately stand perfectly still, and wait thus until the bear again resumes feeding or moves away. Then the hunter rushes forward, but all the while watches keenly to see when it stops to look again; and at the first sign of that the hunter becomes rigid once more. Such tactics may be successful two or three times but rarely more, so then the hunter had best fire. Now, my son, when you go hunting you will know what to do, and if Amik would only pay attention to what I say, he, too, might become a better hunter, for I have had much experience in hunting both black and grizzly bears.”

#### NEYKIA AND HER LOVER

As the weeks passed, the children devoted themselves to their winter play and spent most of their days in the open air. Tobogganing was their greatest sport. Often did they invite me to take part in this, and whenever, in descending a slope, a sled-load was upset, it always created hilarious laughter.

The younger children, even during the severest part of the winter when it registered forty or more degrees below zero, were always kept comfortably warm, sometimes uncomfortably warm, in the rabbit-skin coats that their mother and their grandmother had made for them. The rabbit skins were cut



into thin, spiral strips and twisted, with the hair-side out, about thin thongs, and woven together like a small-meshed fish-net, so that, though the hair overlapped and filled every mesh completely, one's fingers might be passed through the garment anywhere. They also made rabbit-skin blankets in the same way; and of all blankets used in the north woods, none has so many good qualities. A rabbit-skin blanket is less bulky than that of the caribou skin; it is warmer than the famous four-point woollen blanket of the H. B. Co., and not only ventilates better than either of the others, but it is light to carry. It has the drawback, however, that unless it is enclosed in a covering of some light material, the hair gets on everything, for as long as the blanket lasts it sheds rabbit hair. I have tried many kinds of beds, and many kinds of blankets, and sleeping bags, too, even the Eskimo sleeping bag of double skin—hairless sealskin on the outside and hairy caribou skin on the inside—and many a night I have slept out in the snow when it was fifty degrees below zero, and experience has taught me that the rabbit skin blanket is best for winter use in the northern forest. A sleeping bag that is large enough to get into is too large when you are in it; you cannot wrap it around you as you can a blanket, therefore it is not so warm; besides, it is harder to keep a bag free of gathering moisture than a blanket.

But to return to the children. It used to amuse me to see the boys returning from their hunts carrying their guns over their shoulders. The contrast in size between the weapons and the bearers of them was so great that by comparison the lads looked like Liliputians, yet with all the dignified air of great hunters they would stalk up to their sisters and hand them their guns and game bags to be disposed of while they slipped off their snowshoes, lighted their pipes, and entered the lodge. By the way, I don't believe I have mentioned that in winter time the guns are never kept in the lodges, but always put under cover on the stages, as the heat of the lodges would cause the guns to

sweat and therefore to require constant drying and oiling; and for the same reason, in winter time, when a hunter is camped for the night, he does not place his gun near the open fire, but sets it back against a tree, well out of range of the heat.

On one of their rounds of the trapping trails the boys discovered a splendid black fox in one of Oo-koo-hoo's traps, and it was with great pride that the little chaps returned home with the prize.

One sunny day, late in November, while tobogganing with the children on the hillside, our sport was interrupted by the approach of a young stranger, an Indian youth of about seventeen. He came tramping along on snowshoes with his little hunting toboggan behind him on which was lashed his caribou robe, his tea-pail, his kit bag, and a haunch of young moose as a present to Amik and his wife. In his hand he carried his gun in a moose-skin case. He was a good-looking young fellow, and wore the regulation cream-coloured H. B. *capote* with hood and turned-back cuffs of dark blue. He wore no cap, but his hair was fastened back by a broad yellow ribbon that encircled his head. At first I thought he was the advance member of a hunting party, but when I saw the bashful yet persistent way in which he sidled up to Neykia, and when I observed, too, the shy, radiant glance of welcome she gave him, I understood; so also did the children, but the little rogues, instead of leaving the young couple alone, teased their sister aloud, and followed the teasing with boisterous laughter. It was then that I obtained my first impression of the mating of the natives of the northern forest. The sylvan scene reminded me of the mating, too, of the white people of that same region, and I thought again of the beautiful Athabasca. Was it in the same way that her young white man had come so many miles on snowshoes through the winter woods just to call upon her? It set me thinking. Again, I wondered who "Son-in-law" could be? Whence did he come?

But, perhaps, after all he was no super-man, or, rather, super-lover, for had not Neykia's beau travelled alone in the dead of winter, over ninety miles, just to see her once again and to speak to her? Shing-wauk—The Little Pine—as the Indians called him, stayed three days, but I did not see much of him, for I left early the following morning on another round of another trapping-path.

## OO-KOO-HOO AND THE WOLF

As a faint gray light crept through the upper branches of the eastern trees and warned the denizens of the winter wilderness of approaching day, the door-skin flapped aside and a tall figure stepped from the cozy fire-lit lodge into the outer sombreness of the silent forest. It was Oo-koo-hoo. His form clad in fox-skin cap, blanket *capote*, and leggings, made a picturesque silhouette of lighter tone against the darker shadows of the woods as he stood for a moment scanning the starry sky. Re-entering the lodge, he partook of the breakfast his wife had cooked for him, then he kissed her and went outside. Going to the stage, he took down his five-foot snowshoes, slipped his moccasined feet into the thongs, and with his gun resting in the hollow of his bemittened hand, and the sled's hauling-line over his shoulder, strode off through the vaulted aisles between the boles of the evergreens; while through a tiny slit in the wall of his moose-skin home two loving eyes watched the stalwart figure vanishing among the trees.

Later on, though the sun was already shining, it was still intensely cold. As we went along, Oo-koo-hoo's breath rose like a cloud of white smoke fifteen or twenty feet in the air before it disappeared. Only the faintest whisper of scuffling snowshoes and scrunching snow could be heard; the sound of the occasional snapping of a twig came as a startling report compared with the almost noiseless tread of the hunter. A



little cloud of powdery snow rose above the dragging heels of his snowshoes, and, whirling about, covered the back of his leggings with a coating of white. Onward he strode, twisting through the tangled scrub, stooping under a fallen tree, stepping over a snow-capped log, or pacing along a winter-locked stream.

When Oo-koo-hoo came to a district overgrown with willows interspersed with poplars, he stopped to examine a snare set for lynx. It had not been disturbed, but a little farther on we saw the form of a dead lynx hanging from a tossing-pole above the trail. The carcass was frozen stiff, and the face still showed the ghastly expression it had worn in its death struggle. The rigid body was taken down and lashed to the sled. Resetting the snare, we continued our way. Farther on, in a hilly country timbered with spruce, where there was not much undergrowth, we came to marten traps. In swampy places, or where there were creeks and small lakes, we examined traps and deadfalls set for mink, muskrat, beaver, fisher, and otter. Where the country was fairly open and marked with rabbit runways we came upon traps set for foxes and wolves.

The gray, or timber, wolf is trapped in the same way as the coloured fox, save only that the trap is larger. Though the steel trap is much in vogue among white men and half-breeds, the deadfall, even to this day, is much preferred by the Indian. Though, in the first place, it requires more labour to build, yet it requires less for transportation since the materials are all at hand; and, besides, when once built it lasts for years. Then, again, it is not only cheaper, but it is more deadly than the steel trap, for once the animal is caught, it seldom escapes. With the steel trap it is different, as animals often pull away from the steel jaws or even gnaw off a foot in order to get free. If, however, the hunter's deadfalls and traps have been set in vain, and if the wolf has been causing trouble and the hunter is determined to secure him, he will sit up for him at night in the hope of getting a shot at him. Years ago many wolves were

destroyed with poison, but nowadays it has gone out of use—that is, among the fur-hunters of the forest.

When a wolf is caught in a trap and he sees a hunter approaching, he will at first lie down, close his eyes, and keep as still as possible to escape notice; but should he find that the hunter is still coming on, say to within twenty paces from him, he will fly into a rage, show his fangs, bristle his hair, and get ready for a spring. The hunter usually takes a green stick about a yard long by two inches thick, and instead of striking a great, swinging blow with both hands, he holds the stick in one hand and strikes a short, quick, though powerful, blow, hitting the brute on the snout close to the eyes. That stuns him, and then the hunter, with either foot or knee, presses over the heart until death ensues. But clubbing the wolf is dangerous work, for the hunter may hit the trap and set the captive free, or it may bite him. So the gun is frequently used, but only to shoot the wolf in the head, as a wound anywhere else would injure the fur.

Late in the afternoon, as we were approaching a wolf trap, Oo-koo-hoo, who was leading the way, suddenly stopped and gazed ahead. A large wolf was lying in the snow, evidently pretending to be dead. One of its forepaws was held by the trap, and the hunter drew his axe and moved forward. As we came near, the beast could stand the strain no longer, but rose up with bristling hair, champing fangs, and savage growl. When Oo-koo-hoo had almost reached the deeply marked circle in the snow where the wolf had been struggling to gain its freedom, he paused and said:

“My brother, I need your coat, so turn your eyes away while I strike.” A momentary calmness came over the beast, but as the hunter raised his axe it suddenly crouched, and with its eyes flashing with rage, sprang for Oo-koo-hoo’s throat. Its mighty leap, however, ended three feet short of the mark, for the trap chain grew taut, jerked it down and threw it violently

upon its back. Instantly regaining its feet, it dashed away on three legs, and in its effort to escape dragged the clog through the snow. The bounding clog sent the snow flying, and the hunter rushed in pursuit, while the wolf dodged among the trees to escape a blow from Oo-koo-hoo. Then it bolted again, and ran straight for a few yards until the clog caught and held fast. The hunter, pressing on with raised axe, had no time to draw back when the brute sprang for him as it did; luckily, however, his aim was true: the back of the axe descended upon the wolf's head, and it fell dead. This was fortunate for the hunter, as unwarily he had allowed himself so to get between the clog and the beast that the chain almost swung over his snowshoes. If he had missed his aim, no doubt it would have gone hard with him.

A few slant rays of the sun penetrating the deep gloom of the thick forest and reminding us that day was fast passing, we decided to camp there for the night. So we cut a mattress of brush, made a fire, and refreshed ourselves with supper before we started to skin the wolf.

#### THE WAYS OF A WOLF

Talk of wolves prevailed all evening, and Oo-koo-hoo certainly had a store of information upon that subject. In expressing surprise that a wolf had strength enough to jerk about a big drag-log, as though it were merely a small stick, he replied that once when he had killed a full-grown bull-moose and dressed and hung up the meat, he had left for camp with part of his prize, but on returning again to the cache, he had found a wolf moving off with one of the hindquarters. It must have weighed close upon a hundred pounds. But perhaps, if I quote Charles Mair, the strength and endurance of a wolf will be better realized: "In the sketch of 'North-Western America' (1868) Archbishop Taché, of St. Boniface, Manitoba,



recounts a remarkable instance of persevering fortitude exhibited by a large, dark wolf caught in a steel trap at Isle a la Crosse many years ago. A month afterward it was killed near Green Lake, ninety miles distant, with the trap and connecting wood-block still attached to one of its hind legs. It had evidently dragged both around in the snow for many a mile, during a period of intense cold, and it is, therefore, not surprising that it was a 'walking skeleton' when finally secured."

Though the timber-wolf is a fast traveller, it cannot out-distance the greyhound or wolf hound; but though it is seldom seen in water it is a good swimmer. Its weight may run from seventy-five to one hundred and fifty pounds, and an extra large wolf may stand close to thirty inches at the shoulder, and be over five feet in length. In colour they range from white to nearly black, but the ordinary colour is a light brownish gray. Usually they mate in February, but whether or not for life, it is hard to say. They breed in a hollow log, or tree or stump, or in a hole in the ground, or in a cave. The young are normally born in April, usually six or eight in a litter, and the father helps to care for them.

Many of the wolves I have seen were running in pairs, some in families, and the greatest number I have ever seen together was seven. That was in Athabasca in the winter time. The seven were in a playful mood, racing around and jumping over one another; and though all were full-grown, five of them displayed the romping spirits of puppies, and I wondered if they could be but one family. Though my dog-driver and I, with our dog-train, passed within about a hundred paces of them, and though we were all on a sunny lake, they never ceased their play for a single moment, nor did they show in any way that they had seen us.

There are several voices of the wilderness that cause some city people alarm and dread, and they are the voices of the owl, the loon, and the timber-wolf. But to me their voices

bring a solemn, at times an eerie, charm, that I would gladly go miles to renew. Though much of the wolf-howling has been of little appeal, I have heard wolf concerts that held me spell-bound. On some occasions—but always at night—they lasted without scarcely any intermission for three or four hours. The first part of the programme was usually rendered—according to the sound of their voices—by the youngest of the pack; later the middle-aged seemed to take the stage; but of all the performance, nothing equalled in greatness of volume or in richness of tone the closing numbers, and they were always rendered by what seemed to be some mighty veteran, the patriarch of the pack, for his effort was so thrilling and awe-inspiring that it always sent the gooseflesh rushing up and down my back. Many a time, night after night, beneath the Northern Lights, I have gone out to the edge of a lake to listen to them.

When hunting big game, such as deer, wolves assist one another and display a fine sense of the value of team-work in running down their prey. Though the wolf is a shy and cautious animal, he is no coward, as the way he will slash into a pack of dogs goes far to prove. In the North the stories of the wolf's courage are endless; here, for example, is one: "During our residence at Cumberland House in 1820," says Richardson, "a wolf, which had been prowling and was wounded by a musket ball and driven off, returned after it became dark, whilst the blood was still flowing from its wound, and carried off a dog, from amongst fifty others, that howled piteously, but had no courage to unite in an attack on their enemy."

Nevertheless, wolves rarely attack man, in fact, only when they are afflicted with rabies or hydrophobia. No doubt everyone has read, at one time or another, harrowing stories of the great timber-wolves of our northern forest forming themselves into huge packs and pursuing people all over the wilderness until there is nothing left of the unfortunate community save

a few odds and ends of cheap jewellery. Even our most dignified and reliable newspapers are never loath to publish such thrilling drivel; and their ignorant readers gulp it all down, apparently with a relishing shudder; for the dear public not only loves to be fooled, but actually gloats over that sort of thing, since it is their hereditary belief.

When I was a boy, I, too, thrilled over such nonsense, and when I made my first trip into the forest I began to delve for true wolf stories, and I have been delving ever since. So far, after over thirty years of digging, I have actually dug up what I believe to be one authentic story of an unprovoked wolf having actually attacked and killed a man. On several occasions, too, I have had the satisfaction of running to cover some of the wolf stories published in our daily press. I read a few years ago in one of Canada's leading daily papers—and no doubt the same account was copied throughout the United States—a thrilling story of two lumber-jacks in the wilds of Northern Ontario being pursued by a pack of timber-wolves, and the exhausted woodsmen barely escaping with their lives, being forced by the ferocious brutes to spend a whole night in a tree at a time when the thermometer registered—below zero. I am sorry I have forgotten the exact degree of frost the paper stated, but as a rule it is always close to 70 or 80 degrees below zero when the great four-legged demons of the forest go on the rampage.

#### THE WOLVES AND GREENHORNS

Several years later, when I was spending the summer at Shahwandahgooze, in the Laurentian Mountains, I again met Billy Le Heup, the hunter, and one night when we were listening to a wolf concert I mentioned the foregoing newspaper thriller. Billy laughed and acknowledged that he, too, had read it, but not until several weeks after he had had a chance to



investigate, first hand, the very same yarn; for he, too, had been trailing wolf stories all his life.

It so happened that Le Heup's work had taken him through the timber country north of Lake Temiscamingue. While stopping one day at a lumber camp to have a snack, three men entered the cookery where he was eating. One of them was the foreman, and he was in a perfect rage. He had discharged the other two men, and now he was warning them that if they didn't get something to eat pretty — quick and leave the camp in a — of a hurry, he would kick them out. Then, just before he slammed the door and disappeared, he roared out at them that not for one moment would he stand for such — rot, as their being chased and treed all night by wolves.

When quiet was restored and the two men had sat down beside Le Heup at the dining table, he had questioned them and they had told him a graphic story of how they had been chased by a great pack of wolves and how they had managed to escape with their lives by climbing a tree only just in the nick of time; and, moreover, how the ferocious brutes had kept them there all night long, and how, consequently, they had been nearly frozen to death.

It was a thrilling story and so full of detail that even "old-timer" Le Heup grew quite interested and congratulated himself on having at last actually heard, first hand, a true story of how Canadian timber-wolves, though unprovoked, had pursued, attacked, and treed two men. Indeed, he was so impressed that he decided to back-track the heroes' trail and count for himself just how many wolves the pack had numbered. So he got the would-be lumber-jacks—for they were greenhorns from the city—to point out for him their incoming trail, which he at once set out to back-track. After a tramp of three or four miles he came to the very tree which from all signs they had climbed and in which they had spent the night. Then desiring to count the wolf tracks in the snow, he looked around,

but never a one could he see. Walking away for about a hundred yards he began to circle the tree, but still without success. He circled again with about an eighth of a mile radius, but still no wolf tracks were to be seen. As a last resort he circled once more about a quarter of a mile from the tree, and this time he was rewarded; he found wolf tracks in the snow. There had been three wolves. They had been running full gallop. Moreover, they had been trailing a white-tailed deer; but never once had either deer or wolves paused in their run, nor had they come within a quarter of a mile of the tree in which the greenhorns from the city had spent the night. Of such material are the man-chasing, man-killing wolf stories made.

Frequently I have had timber-wolves follow me, sometimes for half an hour or so; on one occasion two of the largest and handsomest timber-wolves I ever saw followed me for over two hours. During that time they travelled all round me, ahead, behind, and on either side; and occasionally they came within sixty or seventy feet of me. Yet never once, by action or expression, did they show any signs other than those which two friendly but very shy dogs might have shown toward me.

#### THE WOLF THAT KILLED A MAN

Of course, wolves will attack a man; when they are trapped, wounded, or cornered—just as a muskrat will; but of all the wolf stories I have ever heard, in which wolves killed a man, the following is the only one I have any reason to believe, as it was told me first-hand by a gentleman whose word I honour, and whose unusual knowledge of animal life and northern travel places his story beyond a doubt.

One winter's day in the seventies, when Mr. William Cornwallis King was in charge of Fort Rae, one of the Hudson's Bay Company's posts on Great Slave Lake, he was snowshoe-

ing to a number of Indian camps to collect furs, and had under his command several Indians in charge of his dog-trains. On the way they came upon a small party of Dog-rib Indians, who, after a smoke and a chat, informed him that, being in need of meat, one of their party, named Pot-fighter's-father, had set out three days before to hunt caribou; and as he had not returned, they were afraid lest some evil had befallen him. When Mr. King learned that it had been Pot-fighter's-father's intention to return to camp on the evening of the first day, he advised the Indians to set out at once in search of him.

After following his tracks for half a day they came suddenly upon the footprints of an unusually large wolf which had turned to trail the hunter. For some miles the brute had evidently followed close beside the trail of Pot-fighter's-father, diverging at times as though seeking cover, and then again stalking its prey in the open. One Indian continued to follow the old man's trail, while another followed that of the wolf. They had not gone far before they discovered that Pot-fighter's-father had come upon a herd of caribou, and a little farther on they found, lying on the snow, a couple of caribou carcasses that he had shot. Strange to say, the animals had not been skinned, nor had their tongues been removed. More remarkable still, the wolf—although passing close to them—had not stopped to feed. Soon they came upon another dead caribou, and this time Pot-fighter's-father had skinned it, and had cut out its tongue; but again the wolf had refused to touch the deer.

Continuing their pursuit, they discovered a brush windbreak where the hunter had evidently stopped to camp for the night. Now they noticed that the tracks of the wolf took to cover among the scrub. Approaching the shelter, they read in the snow the signs of a terrible struggle between a man and a wolf. The hunter's gun, snowshoes, and sash containing his knife, rested against the windbreak, and his axe stood in the



snow where he had been cutting brush. From the snow the Indians read the story of the long-drawn fight. Here it told how the great wolf had leaped upon the back of the unsuspecting man while he was carrying an armful of brush, and had knocked him down. There it showed that the man had grappled with the brute and rolled it over upon its back. Here the signs showed that the wolf had broken free; there, that the two had grappled again, and in their struggle had rolled over and over. The snow was now strewn with wolf-hair, and dyed with blood. While the dreadful encounter had raged, the battleground had kept steadily shifting nearer the gun. Just a couple of yards away from it lay the frozen body of poor old Pot-fighter's-father. His deerskin clothing was slit to tatters; his scalp was torn away; his fingers were chewed off, but his bloody mouth was filled with hair and flesh of the wolf.

After burying the body of old Pot-fighter's-father in a mound of stones, the Indians determined to continue in pursuit of the wolf. Its tracks at last led them to a solitary lodge that stood in the shelter of a thicket of spruce. There the hunters were greeted by an Indian who was living in the tepee with his wife and baby. After having a cup of tea, a smoke, and then a little chat, the hunters enquired about the tracks of the great wolf that had brought them to the lodge. The Indian told them that during the night before last, while he and his wife were asleep with the baby between them, they had been awakened by a great uproar among the dogs. They had no sooner sat up than the dogs had rushed into the tepee followed by an enormous wolf. Leaping up, the hunter had seized his axe and attacked the beast, while his wife had grabbed the baby, wrapped it in a blanket, and rushing outside, had rammed the child out of sight in a snowdrift, and returned to help her husband to fight the brute. The wolf had already killed one of the dogs, and the Indian in his excitement had tripped upon the bedding, fallen, and lost his grip upon his

axe. When he rose, he found the wolf between himself and his weapon. His wife, however, had seized a piece of firewood and, being unobserved by the wolf, had used it as a club and dealt the beast so powerful a blow upon the small of the back that it had been seriously weakened and had given the Indian an opportunity to recover his axe, with which at last he had managed to kill the wolf.

It was Mr. King's belief, however, that such unusual behaviour of a wolf was caused by distemper, for the brute seemed to display no more fear of man than would a mad dog. And he added that the behaviour of the wolf in question was no more typical of wolves in general than was the behaviour of a mad dog typical of dogs.

#### COMING OF THE FUR-RUNNERS

That night, when we returned home, Oo-koo-hoo said to his grandsons: "Ne-geek and Ah-ging-goos, my grandchildren, the fur-runner is coming soon. To-morrow do you both take the dogs and break a two-days' trail on Otter River in order to hasten his coming."

Next morning the boys set out to break the trail. When they camped on Otter River on the afternoon of the second day they cached in the river ice some fish for the trader's dogs. They chopped a hole and, after placing the fish in, filled it up with water, which they allowed to freeze, with the tail of a single fish protruding, in order to show the fur-runner what was cached below. To mark the spot, they planted a pole with its butt in the hole, and rigged up a tripod of sticks to support it. At the top of the pole they tied a little bag of tea and a choice piece of meat for the trader. At the bend of the river below, where he would surely pass, they erected another pole with a bunch of fir twigs attached, for the purpose of attracting his attention to their tracks.

On their return home they found Oo-koo-hoo and Amik sorting their furs in anticipation of the fur-runner's arrival. Before them lay, among the other skins, the skin of the black fox, and when the boys entered the lodge Oo-koo-hoo addressed the whole family, saying:

"Do not mention the black fox to the fur-runner, since I intend keeping it until I go to the Post, in the hope of making a better bargain there. Now sort your skins, and set aside those you wish to give in payment on your debt to the Great Company."

During the afternoon of the following day Lawson the fur-runner for the Hudson's Bay Company arrived with his dog-train. He shook hands with Oo-koo-hoo and Amik and the boys, and kissed the women and the girls, as the custom of the traders is. It being late in the day, Oo-koo-hoo decided not to begin trading until next morning. So they spent the evening in spinning yarns around the fire. Shortly after breakfast strange dogs were heard. The boys ran out and saw an unknown man approaching. When the newcomer—a French-Canadian half-breed—had eaten, and had joined the others in a smoke, he gave me a letter from Free Trader Spear. Then Oo-koo-hoo began questioning him:

"My brother, you are a stranger in this country; so I have given you fire and food and tobacco in friendship. Tell me now why and from whence you come?"

The half-breed replied: "My brother, I come from the Border Lands—where the plains and the forests meet—and my name is Gibeault. I have come to trade regularly with you as I am now working for Free Trader Spear, whose post, as you know, is near Fort Consolation. You will do well to encourage opposition to the Great Company, and thus raise the price of furs."

The half-breed then presented the hunters with several plugs of "T & B," some matches, tea, sugar, flour, and a piece



of "sow-belly." For some time Oo-koo-hoo sat holding a little fresh-cut tobacco in his hand, until Gibeault, taking notice, asked him why he did not smoke it.

"The Great Company always gives me a pipe," replied the hunter.

The runner for the free trader, not to be outdone, gave him a pipe.

"I suppose," began Oo-koo-hoo, "that your heart is glad to see me."

"Yes," replied Gibeault, "and I want to get some of your fur."

"That is all very well, but I will see which way you look at me," returned the Indian.

"Have you much fur?" asked the half-breed.

"I have enough to pay my debt to the Great Company."

"Yes, I know, but you will have some left, and I want to do business with you, so bring out your furs and I will treat you right."

"That sounds well, but you must remember that though the Great Company charges more, their goods are the best goods, while yours are all cheap rubbish."

Thinking the opportunity a favourable one, Gibeault assumed an air of friendly solicitude and said:

"The Company has cheated your people so many hundred years that they are now very rich. No wonder they can afford to give you high prices for your furs. Free Trader Spear is a poor but honest man. It is to your great advantage to trade part of your furs with me in order to make it worth his while to send me here every winter. As you know, my presence here compels the Company to pay full value for your furs and so you are the one who reaps the greatest benefit."

"That is partly true," answered Oo-koo-hoo, "but I must be loyal to the Company. You are here to-day and away to-

morrow; but the Company is here for ever. But I will not be hard on you; I will wait and see how you look at me."

For a while the dignified Indian sat puffing at his pipe and gazing at the fire. Every line of his weather-beaten and wrinkled but handsome face was full of sterling character. At times his small eyes twinkled as a flash of cunning crept into them, and a keen sense of humour frequently twitched the corners of his determined mouth. Then he brought out a pack of furs and, handing it to Lawson, said:

"This is to pay the Great Company for the advances they gave us last summer."

Lawson took the bundle without opening it, as it would not be checked over until he delivered it at Fort Consolation. Resenting the Indian's attitude toward Gibeault he began:

"I see, now that there's another trader here, it's easy for you to forget your old friends. The free trader comes and goes. Give him your furs, an' he doesn't care whether you're dead to-morrow. It's not like that with the Great Company. The Company came first among your people, and since then it has been like a father, not only to all your people before you, but to you as well. Whenever your forefathers were smitten with hunger or disease, who looked after them? It wasn't the free trader; it was the Company. Who sells you the best goods? It isn't the free trader; it's the Company. Who gave you your debt last fall and made it possible for you to hunt this winter? It wasn't the free trader; it was the Company. My brother, you have none to thank but the Great Company that you're alive to-day."

With a grunt of disapproval Oo-koo-hoo sullenly retorted:

"The Priest says it is The Master of Life we have to thank for that. I am sure that the Commissioner of the Great Company is not so great as God. It is true you give us good prices now, but it is also true that you have not given us back the countless sums you stole from our fathers and grandfathers

and all our people before them; for did you not wait until the coming of the free traders before you would give us the worth of our skins? No wonder you are great masters; it seems to me that it takes great rogues to become great masters."

The angry Lawson, to save a quarrel, bit his moustache, smiled faintly and, presenting the hunter with even more than Gibeault had given, said:

"Never mind, my brother, you're a pretty smart man."

Without replying, Oo-koo-hoo accepted the present so eagerly that he jerked it out of the trader's hand. That pleased Lawson. Presently the Indian threw down a bear skin, saying:

"My brother, this is to see how you look at me."

Now the way of the experienced fur-runner is to offer a big price—often an excessive price—for the first skin. He calculates that it puts the Indian in a good humour and in the end gives the trader a chance of getting ahead of the native. That is just what Lawson did, and Gibeault refused to raise the bid.

"My brother," said the Indian addressing the latter, "you had better go home if you cannot pay better prices than the Great Company."

Gibeault, nettled, outbid his rival for the next skin, and thus it went on, first one and then the other raising the prices higher and higher, much to the delight of the Indians. Oo-koo-hoo had already sold a number of skins for more than their market value before it dawned on the white men that they were playing a losing game. Though glaring savagely at each other, both were ready to capitulate. Lawson, pretending to examine some of Gibeault's goods, stooped and whispered:

"We're actin' like fools. If we keep this up our bosses will fire us both."

"Let's swap even—you take every other skin at your own figure," returned the French half-breed.

"Agreed," said Lawson, straightening up.



No longer outbidding one another, they got the next few skins below the market price. But before the traders had made good their loss the Indian gathered up his furs and turning to the fur-runners with a smile, said:

“My brothers, as I see that you have agreed to cheat me, I have decided that I and my people will keep all our furs until we go out next spring; so it is now useless for you to remain any longer.”

Having read the note Gibeault brought me from Free Trader Spear, I hastened to hand the half-breed my reply, accepting Mr. and Mrs. Spear's invitation to be their guest for a few days when everyone would be gathering at Fort Consolation to attend the New Year's dance; and again I wondered if “Son-in-law” would be there.

## V

### MEETING OF THE WILD MEN

#### WHO IS SON-IN-LAW?

CHRISTMAS week had arrived and now we were off for the New Year's dance to be held at Fort Consolation. Instead of travelling round three sides of an oblong as we had done to reach Oo-koo-hoo's hunting ground by canoe, we now, travelling on snowshoes, cut across country, over hill and valley, lake and river, in a southeasterly direction, until we struck Caribou River and then turned toward White River and finally arrived at God's Lake. Our little party included Oo-koo-hoo, his wife Ojistoh, their granddaughter Neykia, and myself. Our domestic outfit was loaded upon two hunting sleds in the hauling of which we all took turns, as well as in relieving each other in the work of track beating. At night we camped in the woods without any shelter save brush windbreaks over the heads of our beds, our couches being made of balsam-twigs laid shingle fashion in the snow. For the sake of warmth Ojistoh and Neykia slept together, while Oo-koo-hoo and I cuddled up close to one another and fitted together like spoons in a cutlery case, for the cold sometimes dipped to forty below.

The prisoner of the city, however, may think sleeping under such conditions not only a terrible hardship but a very dangerous thing in the way of catching one's death of cold. I can assure him it is nothing of the kind—when the bed is properly made. And not only does one *never* catch cold under such conditions, but it is my experience that there is no easier

way to get rid of a bad cold than to sleep out in the snow, wrapped in a Hudson's Bay blanket, a caribou robe, or a rabbit-skin quilt, when the thermometer is about fifty below zero. But rather than delay over a description in detail of the mere novelty of winter travel, let us hurry along to our first destination, and visit the Free Trader Mr. Spear and his family, and find out for our own satisfaction whether or not the mysterious "Son-in-law" had recently been courting the charming Athabasca.

When we reached God's Lake, for a while we snowshoed down the centre, until at the parting of our ways we said good-bye, for the Indians were heading directly for Fort Consolation. As I neared Spearhead and came in view of its one and only house, the Free Trader's dogs set up a howl, and Mr. Spear came out to greet me and lead me into the sitting room where I was welcomed by his wife and daughter. Now I made a discovery: quartered in a box in the hall behind the front door they had three geese that being quite free to walk up and down the hall, occasionally strolled about for exercise. As good luck would have it, supper was nearly ready, and I had just sufficient time to make use of the tin hand-basin in the kitchen before the tea bell rang. Again, during the first half of the meal we all chatted in a lively strain, all save Athabasca, who, though blushing less than usual, smiled a little more, and murmured an occasional yes or no; all the while looking even more charming. But her composure endured not long, for her mother presently renewed the subject of "Son-in-law":

"Father, don't you think it would be a good idea if you took son-in-law into partnership very soon?"

"Yes, Mother, I do, because business is rapidly growing, and I'll need help in the spring. Besides, it would give me a chance to do my own fur-running<sup>7</sup> in winter, and in that way I believe I could double, if not treble, our income."



Athabasca turned crimson and I followed suit—for being a born blusher myself, and mortally hating it, I could never refrain from sympathizing with others similarly afflicted.

“Precisely, Father,” replied Mrs. Spear, “that’s exactly what I thought. So you see you wouldn’t be making any sacrifice whatever, and such an arrangement would prove an advantage all round. Everybody would be the happier for it, and it seems to me to delay the wedding would be a vital mistake.”

From that moment until we left the table Athabasca concentrated her vision on her plate; and I wondered more than ever who “Son-in-law” could be. Then an idea came to me, and I mused: “We’ll surely see him at Fort Consolation.”

After supper I discovered a new member of the household, a chore-boy, twenty-eight years of age, who had come out from England to learn farming in the Free Trader’s stump lot, and who was paying Mr. Spear so many hundred dollars a year for that privilege, and also for the pleasure of daily cleaning out the stable—and the pig pen. When I first saw him, I thought: “Why here, at last, is ‘Son-in-law.’” But on second consideration, I knew he was not the lucky man, for it was evident the Spears did not recognize him as their social equal, since they placed him, at meal time, out in the kitchen at the table with their two half-breed maid-servants.

That evening, while sitting around the big wood stove, we discussed Shakespeare, Byron, Scott, and even the latest novel that was then in vogue—“Trilby,” if I remember right—for the Spears not only subscribed to the *Illustrated London News* and *Blackwood’s* but they took *Harper’s* and *Scribner’s*, too. And by the way, though Athabasca had never been to school, her mother had personally attended to her education. When bedtime arrived, they all peeled off their moccasins and stockings and hung them round the stove to dry, and then pitter-pattered up the cold, bare stairs in their bare

feet. I was shown into the spare room and given a candle, and when I bade them good-night and turned to close the door, I discovered that there was no door to close, nor was there even a curtain to screen me from view. The bed, however, was an old-fashioned wooden affair with a big solid footboard, so I concluded that in case of any one passing the doorway, I could crouch behind the foot of the bed. Then, when I blew out my candle, I got a great surprise, for lo and behold! I could see all over the house! I could see "Paw and Maw" getting undressed, Athabasca saying her prayers, and the half-breed maids getting into bed.

How did it happen? The cracks between the upright boards of my partition were so wide that I could have shoved my fingers through. As a matter of fact, Mr. Spear explained next day, the lumber being green, rather than nail the boards tightly into place, he had merely stood them up, and waited for them to season.

During the night the cold grew intense, and several times I was startled out of my sleep by a frosty report from the ice and snow on the roof that reminded one of the firing of a cannon.

In the morning when the geese began screeching in the lower hall, I thought it was time to get up, and was soon in the very act of pulling off a certain garment over my head when one of the half-breed maids—the red-headed one whose hair Mr. Spear had cut off with the horse clippers—intruded herself into my room to see if I were going to be down in time for breakfast, and I had to drop behind the foot of the bed.

At breakfast, the first course was oatmeal porridge; the second, "Son-in-law"; the third, fried bacon, toast, and tea; after which we all put on our wraps for our five-mile trip across God's Lake to Fort Consolation. Everyone went, maids, chore-boy, and all, and everyone made the trip on snowshoes—

all save the trader's wife, who rode in state, in a carriole, hauled by a tandem train of four dogs.

#### THE NEW YEAR'S DANCE

It was a beautiful sunny day and the air was very still; and though the snow was wind-packed and hard, the footing was very tiresome, for the whole surface of the lake was just one endless mass of hard-packed snowdrifts that represented nothing so much as a great, stormy, white-capped sea that had been instantly congealed. And for us it was just up and down, in and out, up and down, in and out, all the way over. These solid white waves, however, proved one thing, and that was the truth of Oo-koo-hoo's woodcraft; for, just as he had previously told me, if we had been suddenly encompassed by a dense fog or a heavy snowstorm, we could never for a moment have strayed from our true course; as all the drifts pointed one way, south-by-southeast, and therefore must have kept us to our proper direction.

There were many dogs and sleds, and many Indians and half-breeds, too, about the Fort when we arrived; and as the dogs heralded our approach, the Factor came out to greet us and wish us a Happy New Year. At the door Mrs. Mackenzie, the half-breed wife of the Factor, was waiting with a beaming smile and a hearty welcome for us; and after we had removed our outer wraps, she led us over to the storehouse in which a big room had been cleared, and heated, and decorated to answer as a ballroom and banqueting hall. Tables were being laid for the feast, and Indian mothers and maidens and children, too, were already sitting on the floor around the sides of the room, and with sparkling eyes were watching the work in happy expectation. Around the doorway, both out and in, stood the men—Indians and half-breeds and a few French and English Canadians. Some wore hairy caribou *capotes*,





*The bear circled a little in order to descend. Presently it left the shadow of the forest and, emerging into sunlight on a snow-covered ledge, turned its head as though it had heard a sound in the rear. It was Oo-koo-hoo speaking: "Turn your head away, my brother . . ." but the report of his gun cut short his sentence, and the bear, leaping forward, disappeared among . . . See Chapter IV*



others hairless moose-skin jackets trimmed with otter or beaver fur, others again were garbed in duffel *capotes* of various colours with hoods and turned-back cuffs of another hue; but the majority wore *capotes* made of Hudson's Bay blanket and trimmed with slashed fringes at the shoulders and skirt; while their legs were encased in trousers gartered below the knee, and their feet rested comfortably in moccasins. Though, when snowshoeing, all the men wore hip-high leggings of duffel or blanket, the former sometimes decorated with a broad strip of another colour, the latter were always befringed the whole way down the outer seam; both kinds were gartered at the knee. Such leggings are always removed when entering a lodge or house or when resting beside a campfire—in order to free the legs from the gathered snow and prevent it from thawing and wetting the trousers. The children wore outer garments of either blanket or rabbit skin, while the women gloried in brilliant plaid shawls of two sizes—a small one for the head and a large one for the shoulders. The short cloth skirts of the women and girls were made so that the fullness at the waist, instead of being cut away, was merely puckered into place, and beneath the lower hem of the skirt showed a pair of beaded leggings and a pair of silk-worked moccasins.

All the Indians shook hands with us, for in the Canadian Government's treaty with them it is stipulated that: "We expect you to be good friends with everyone, and shake hands with all whom you meet." And I might further add that the Indian—when one meets him in the winter bush—is more polite than the average white man, for he always removes his mitten, and offers one his bare hand. Further, if his hand happens to be dirty, he will spit on it and rub it on his leggings to try and cleanse it before presenting it to you. But when he did that, I could never decide which was the more acceptable condition—before or after.

When the Factor entered, he was greeted with a perfect gale



of merriment, as it was the ancient custom of the Great Company that he should kiss every woman and girl at the New Year's feast. After that historical ceremony was over—in which Free Trader Spear also had to do his duty—and the laughter had subsided, the principal guests were seated at the Factor's table, the company consisting of the three clergymen, the Spears, myself, the two North-West Mounted Policemen—who had just arrived from the south—and a few native headmen, including my friend Oo-koo-hoo. Though the feast was served in relays, some of the guests who were too hungry to await their turn were served as they sat about the floor. The dishes included the choice of moose, caribou, bear, lynx, beaver, or muskrat.

Then a couple of picturesque, shock-haired French Canadians got up on a big box that rested upon a table, and tuning up their fiddles, the dance was soon in full swing. In rapid succession the music changed from the Double Jig to the Reel of Four, the Duck Dance, the Double Reel of Four, the Reel of Eight, and the Red River Jig, till the old log storehouse shook from its foundation right up to its very rafters. The breathless, perspiring, but happy couples kept at it until exhaustion fairly overtook them, and then dropping out now and then, they sat on the floor around the walls till they had rested; and then, with all their might and main, they went at it again. Among other things I noticed that the natives who were smoking were so considerate of their hosts' feelings that they never for a moment forgot themselves enough to soil the freshly scrubbed floor, but always used their upturned fur caps as cuspidors.

The children, even the little tots, showed great interest in the dancing of their parents, and so delighted did they become that they would sometimes gather in a group in a corner and try to step in time with the music.

Everyone that could dance took a turn—even Oo-koo-hoo

and old Granny did the "light fantastic"—and at one time or another all the principal guests were upon the floor; all save—the priest. The scarlet tunics of the corporal and the constable of the Royal North-West Mounted Police as well as the sombre black of the English Church and the Presbyterian clergymen, added much to the whirling colour scheme, as well as to the joy of the occasion. But look where I would I could not find "Son-in-law," and though the blushing Athabasca was often in the dance, it was plain to see her lover was not there, for even the handsome policemen, though they paid her marked attention, gave no sign, either of them, of being the lucky one. In the number of partners, Oo-koo-hoo's granddaughter outshone them all, and, moreover, her lover was present. At every chance Shing-wauk—The Little Pine—was shyly whispering to her and she was looking very happy. Even I rose to the occasion and had for my first partner our host's swarthy wife, a wonderful performer, who, after her husband's retirement from the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, became the most popular dancer in all Winnipeg. Nor must I forget my dance with that merry, muscular, iron-framed lady, Oo-koo-hoo's better half—old Granny—who at first crumpled me up in her gorilla-like embrace, and ended by swinging me clean off my feet, much to the merriment of the Indian maidens.

As the afternoon wore on the Rabbit Dance began, and was soon followed by the Hug-Me-Snug, the Drops of Brandy, and the Saskatchewan Circle, and—last but not least—the Kissing Dance. And when the Kissing Dance was encored for the fifth time, the company certainly proclaimed it a Happy New Year.

#### THE BEAUTIFUL ATHABASCA

Again at tea time the guests gathered round the festive board; then, a little later, the music once more signalled the

dancers to take their places on the floor. Hour after hour it went on. After midnight another supper was served; but still "the band"—consisting of a violin and a concertina—played on, and still the moccasined feet pounded the floor without intermission. At the very height of the fun, when the Free Trader's charming daughter was being whirled about by a scarlet tunic, Mrs. Spear turned to me and beamed:

"Doesn't Athabasca look radiantly beautiful?"

"Indeed she does!" I blushed.

"And what a delightful party this is . . . but there's just one thing lacking . . . to make it perfect."

"What's that?" I enquired.

"A wedding . . . my dear." Then, after a long pause, during which she seemed to be staring at me—but I didn't dare look—she impatiently tossed her head and exclaimed:

"My . . . but some men are deathly slow!"

"Indeed they are," I agreed.

About four o'clock in the morning the music died down, then, after much hand-shaking, the company dispersed in various directions over the moonlit snow; some to their near-by lodges, some to the log shacks in the now-deserted Indian village, and others to their distant hunting grounds. It must have been nearly five o'clock before the ladies in the Factor's house went upstairs, and the men lay down upon caribou, bear, and buffalo skins on the otherwise bare floor of the living room. It was late next morning when we arose, yet already the policemen had vanished—they had again set out on their long northern patrol.

At breakfast Mr. and Mrs. Spear invited me to return and spend the night with them, and as Oo-koo-hoo and his wife wanted to remain a few days to visit some Indian friends, and as the Factor had told me that the north-bound packet with the winter's mail from the railroad was soon due; and as, moreover, the Fur Brigade would be starting south in a few



days, and it would travel for part of the way along our homeward trail, I accepted Mr. Mackenzie's invitation to return to Fort Consolation and depart with the Fur Brigade.

It was a cold trip across the lake as the thermometer had dropped many degrees and a northwest wind was blowing in our faces. As I had frequently had my nose frozen, it now turned white very quickly, and a half-breed, who was crossing with us, turned round every once in a while and exclaimed to me:

"Oh my gud! your nose all froze!"

The snow seemed harder than ever, and for long stretches we took off our snowshoes and ran over the drifts, but so wind-packed were they that they received little impression from our feet. Of course, when we arrived at Spearhead, the house was cold and everything in it above the cellar—except the cats and geese—was frozen solid; but it is surprising how quickly those good old-fashioned box stoves will heat a dwelling; for in twenty or thirty minutes those wood-burning stoves were red-hot and the whole house comfortably warm.

It's strange, but nevertheless true, that "Son-in-law" was never once mentioned at dinner, but later on, when Athabasca and I were sitting one on either side of the room, Mrs. Spear got up and, getting a picture book, asked:

"Mr. Heming, are you fond of pictures? Daughter has a delightful little picture book here that I want her to show you, so now, my dears, both sit over there on the sofa where the light will be better, and look at it together."

Moving over to the old horsehair sofa—the pride of all Spearhead and even of Fort Consolation—we sat down together, much closer than I had expected, as some of the springs were broken, thus forming a hollow in the centre of the affair, into which we both slid without warning—just as though it were a trap set for bashful people. Then Mrs. Spear with a sigh, evidently of satisfaction, withdrew from the room, and

we were left alone together. With the book spread out upon our knees we looked it over for perhaps—— Well, I am not sure how long, but anyway, when I came to, I saw something just in front of me on the floor. Really, it startled me. For in following it up with my eye I discovered that it was the toe of a moccasin, and the worst of it was that it was being worn by Mrs. Spear. There, for ever so long, she must have been standing and watching us. The worst of that household was that all its members wore moccasins, so you could never hear them coming.

That night, when we were sitting around the stove, Mrs. Spear explained to me how she had educated her daughter and added: "But perhaps, after all, if the wedding is not going to take place right away, it might be well to send Daughter to some finishing school for a few months—say in Toronto," and then, after a little pause, and still looking at me, she asked: "To which school would you prefer us to send Athabasca?"

When I named the most fashionable girls' school in that city, "Paw and Maw" settled it, there and then, that Daughter would attend it next fall, that is, unless it was decided to celebrate her wedding at an earlier date.

Next morning, at breakfast, Mrs. Spear suggested that Athabasca should take me for a drive through the woods and Mr. Spear remarked:

"You know, Mr. Heming, we haven't any cutter or any suitable sleigh, and besides, one of the horses is working in the stump lot; but I think I can manage."

In a little while he led a horse round to the front door. The animal had a pole attached to either side, the other end of which dragged out behind; across the two poles, just behind the horse's tail, was fastened a rack of cross poles upon which was placed some straw and a buffalo robe. It was really a *travois*, the kind of conveyance used by the Plains Indians. Getting aboard the affair, off we went, the old plug rumbling

along in a kind of a trotting walk, while Athabasca held the reins. The morning being a fine sunny one, and the trees being draped and festooned with snow, the scene was so beautiful when we got into the thicker woods that it made one think of fairyland. A couple of fluffy little whiskey jacks followed us all the way there and back, just as though they wanted to see and hear everything that was going on; but those little meddlers of the northwoods must have been disappointed, for both Athabasca and I were not only too shy to talk, but too bashful even to sit upright; in fact, we both leaned so far away from one another that we each hung over our side of the trap, and did nothing but gaze far off into the enchanted wood. We must have been gone nearly two hours when the house again came into view. Yes, I enjoyed it. It was so romantic. But what I couldn't understand was why her parents allowed her to go with me, when they were already counting on "Son-in-law" marrying her. It was certainly a mystery to me. However, that afternoon I left for Fort Consolation.

#### BACK TO FORT CONSOLATION

On my way across the lake I noticed that the wind was veering round toward the east and that the temperature was rising. When I arrived in good time for supper Factor Mackenzie seemed relieved, and remarked that the barometer indicated a big storm from the northeast. That night, in front of the big open fire, we talked of the fur trade. Among other books and papers he showed me was a copy of the Company's Deed Poll; not published a century ago, but printed at the time of which I am writing, and thus it read:

"To all whom these presents shall come, The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay send greeting. Whereas His Majesty King Charles the Second did, by His Royal Charter, constitute the Governor



and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay in a Body Corporate, with perpetual succession and with power to elect a Governor and Deputy Governor and Committee for the management of their trade and affairs——."

From it I learned that the commissioned officers appointed by the Company to carry on their trade in Canada were: a Commissioner, three Inspecting Chief Factors, eight Chief Factors, fifteen Factors, ten Chief Traders, and twenty-one Junior Chief Traders, all of whom on appointment became shareholders in the Company. While the Governor and Committee had their offices in London, the Commissioner was the Canadian head with his offices in Winnipeg, and to assist him an advisory council, composed of Chief Factors and Chief Traders, was occasionally called. The Company's territory was divided into four departments—the Western, the Southern, the Northern, and the Montreal—while each department was again sub-divided into many districts, the total number being thirty-four. The non-commissioned employees at the various posts were: clerks, postmasters, and servants. Besides the regular post servants there were others employed such as: voyageurs, among whom were the guides, canoe-men, boatmen, and scowmen; then, again, there were fur-runners, fort-hunters, and packeteers.

In the morning a miserable northeaster was blowing a heavy fall of snow over the country, and the Factor offered to show me the fur-loft where the clerk and a few half-breed men-servants were folding and packing furs. First they were put into a collapsible mould to hold them in the proper form, then when the desired weight of eighty pounds had been reached, they were passed into a powerful home-made fur-press, and after being pressed down into a solid pack, were corded and covered with burlap, and marked ready for shipment. The room in which the men worked was a big loft with endless bundles of skins of many sizes and colours hanging from the

rafters, and with long rows of shelves stacked with folded furs, and with huge piles of pelts and opened bales upon the floor. Also there were moose and caribou horns lying about, and bundles of Indian-made snowshoes hanging by wires from the rafters, and in one corner kegs of dried beaver castors.

#### THE WINTER MAIL ARRIVES

On the morning of the second day of the storm I happened to be in the Indian shop, where I had gone to see the Factor and the clerk barter for the furs of a recently arrived party of Indian fur-hunters, when presently I was startled by hearing:

*"Voyez, voyez, le paquet!"* shouted by Bateese as he floundered into the trading room without a thought of closing the door, though the drifting snow scurried in after him. Vociferously he called to the others to come and see, and instantly trade was stopped. The Factor, the clerk, and the Indians, rushed to the doorway to obtain a glimpse of the long-expected packet. For two days the storm had raged, and the snow was still blowing in clouds that blotted out the neighbouring forest.

"Come awa', Bateese, ye auld fule! Come awa' ben, an steek yon door! Ye dinna see ony packet!" roared the Factor, who could distinguish nothing through the flying snow.

*"Bien, m'sieu,* mebbe she not very clear jus' now; but w'en I pass from de Mad Wolf's Hill, w'en de storm she lif' a leetle, I see two men an' dog-train on de lac below de islan's," replied the half-breed fort-hunter, who had returned from a caribou cache, and whose duty it was to keep the fort supplied with meat.

"Weel, fetch me the gless, ma mon; fetch me the gless an' aiblins we may catch a glint o' them through this smoorin' snaw; though I doot it's the packet, as ye say." And the Factor stood shading his eyes and gazing anxiously in the direction of the invisible islands. But before the fort-hunter

had returned with the telescope, the snowy veil suddenly thinned and revealed the gray figure of a tripper coming up the bank.

"*Quay, quay! Ke-e-e-pling!*" sang out one of the Indians. He had recognized the tripper to be Kipling, the famous snowshoe runner. Immediately all save the Factor rushed forward to meet the little half-breed who was in charge of the storm-bound packet, and to welcome him with a fusilade of gunshots.

Everyone was happy now, for last year's news of the "*Grand Pays*"—the habitant's significant term for the outer world—had at last arrived. The monotonous routine of the Post was forgotten. To-day the long, dreary silence of the winter would be again broken in upon by hearty feasting, merry music, and joyous dancing in honour of the arrival of the half-yearly mail.

All crowded round the voyageur, who, though scarcely more than five feet in height, was famed as a snowshoe runner throughout the wilderness stretching from the Canadian Pacific Railroad to the Arctic Ocean. While they were eagerly plying him with questions, the crack of a dog-whip was heard. Soon the faint tinkling of bells came through the storm. In a moment all the dogs of the settlement were in an uproar, for the packet had arrived.

With a final rush the gaunt, travel-worn dogs galloped through the driving snow, and, eager for the shelter of the trading room, bolted pell-mell through the gathering at the doorway, upsetting several spectators before the driver could halt the runaways by falling headlong upon the foregoer's back and flattening him to the floor.

All was excitement. Every dog at the post dashed in with bristling hair and clamping jaws to overawe the strangers. Amid the hubbub of shouting men, women, and children, the cracking of whips, and the yelping of dogs, the packet was



removed from the overturned sled and hustled into the Factor's office, where it was opened, and the mail quickly overhauled. While the Factor and his clerk were busily writing despatches, a relay of dogs was being harnessed, and two fresh runners were making ready to speed the mail upon its northward way.

Before long the Factor's letters were sealed and carefully deposited in the packet box, which was lashed on the tail of the sled, the forepart of which was packed with blankets, flour, tea, and pork for the packeteers, and frozen whitefish for the dogs. Then amid the usual handshaking the word "*Marche!*" was given, and to the tune of cracking whips, whining dogs, and crunching snow, the northern packet glided out upon the lake with the Indian track-beater hurrying far ahead while the half-breed dog-driver loped behind the sled. Thus for over two centuries the Hudson's Bay Company had been sending its mails through the great wilderness of Northern Canada.

#### THE DOG BRIGADE

That afternoon five dog-trains arrived from outlying posts. They had come to join the Dog Brigade that was to leave Fort Consolation first thing in the morning on its southern way to the far-off railroad. As I wished to accompany the brigade, I had arranged with Oo-koo-hoo that we should do so, as far as we could without going out of our way, in returning to his hunting grounds. So to bed that night we all went very early, and at four o'clock in the morning we were astir again. Breakfast was soon over, then followed the packing of the sleds, the harnessing of the dogs, the slipping of moccasined feet into snowshoe thongs, the shaking of hands, and the wishing of farewells. Already the tracker, or track-beater, had gone ahead to break the trail.

"*M-a-r-r-che!*" (start) shouted the guide—as the head dog-driver is called. Every driver repeated the word; whips cracked;

dogs howled, and the brigade moved forward in single file. At the head went the Factor's train of four powerful-looking and handsomely harnessed dogs hauling a decorated carriage in which the Factor rode and behind which trotted a picturesque half-breed driver. Next in order went the teams of the Church of England clergyman and the Roman Catholic priest, both of whom happened to be going out to the railroad. Behind these followed twelve sleds or toboggans, laden with furs, which the Hudson's Bay Company was shipping to its Department Headquarters. When one remembers that black or silver fox skins are frequently sold for over a thousand dollars each, one may surmise the great value of a cargo of furs weighing nearly four thousand pounds, such as the Dog Brigade was hauling. No wonder the Company was using all haste to place those furs on the London market before the then high prices fell.

The brigade formed an interesting sight, as the Indians, half-breeds, and white men were garbed most curiously; and in strong contrast to the brilliant colours worn by the members of the brigade, the clergymen trotted along in their sombre black—the priest's cassock flowing to his snowshoes, and his crucifix thrust, daggerlike, in his girdle.

The four dogs comprising each of the fur-trains hauled three hundred pounds of fur besides the camp outfit and grub for both driver and dogs—in all, about five hundred pounds to the sled. When the sleighing grew heavy, the drivers used long pushing-poles against the ends of the sleds to help the dogs.

#### TRAVELLING WITH DOG-TRAINS

While the march always started in a stately way—the Factor's carriage in advance—it was not long before the trains abandoned their formal order; for whenever one train was delayed through any one of many reasons, the train behind

invariably strove to steal ahead so that after a few hours' run the best dogs were usually leading.

For several hours we followed the lake and the river, and just before daylight appeared in the southeastern sky the *Aurora Borealis* vanished from view. Later, a golden glow tipping the tops of the tallest trees, heralded the rising of the sun. Coming out upon a little lake—for we were now short-cutting across the country—we saw that the light over the distant hills had broken into a glorious flood of sunshine. Half over the far-off trees, along the horizon, the sun was shining, and the whole southeastern sky seemed aflame with bands and balls of fire. A vertical ribbon of gradually diminishing lustre, scarcely wider than the sun, was rising into the heavens to meet a vast semicircle of rainbow beauty arched above the natural sun. Where the strange halo cut the vertical flame and the horizon on either side three mock suns marked the intersection. Above the natural sun and beneath the halo, four other mock suns studded the vertical band of light. It was a wonderful sight and lasted fully twenty minutes—the sky was just as I have shown it in my picture of the York Factory Packet.

Now the brigade was halted, in *voyageur* parlance, “to spell the dogs one smoke,” which, being translated, meant that the dogs could rest as long as it took their masters to smoke a pipeful of tobacco. The drivers, conversing in little groups or sitting upon sleds as they puffed at their pipes, watched the beautiful phenomenon, and the talk turned to the many remarkable sun-dogs that they had seen. Presently the mock suns grew dim; the arch faded away; the band lost its colour; the true sun rose above the trees and then, as ashes were knocked from pipes, we resumed our journey.

After leaving the lake we entered a muskeg that extended for miles. Its uneven surface was studded with countless grassy hummocks, many of them crowned with willow and alder bushes or gnarled and stunted spruces or jack pines.



It made hard hauling for the dogs. From a distance, the closely following trains reminded one of a great serpent passing over the country, that—when it encountered a hummocky section requiring the trains to turn from side to side, and to glide up and down—seemed to be writhing in pain. Near the end of the swamp an open hillside rose before us, and upon its snowy slopes the sun showed thousands of rabbit-runs intersecting one another in a maze of tracks that made one think of a vast gray net cast over the hill.

Passing into a “bent-pole” district we encountered an endless number of little spruce trees, the tops of which had become so laden with snow that their slender stems, no longer able to sustain the weight, had bent almost double as they let their white-capped heads rest in the snow upon the ground. Later, we entered a park-like forest where pine trees stood apart with seldom any brushwood between. Fresh marten tracks were noticed in the snow. A little farther on, two timber-wolves were seen slinking along like shadows among the distant trees as they paralleled our trail on the right. The dogs noticed them, too, but they, like their masters, were too busy to pay much attention. The wolves were big handsome creatures with thick fluffy coats that waved like tall grasses in a strong breeze as they bounded along.

Coming to a steep hill everyone helped the dogs in their climb. When at last the brigade, puffing and panting, reached the summit, pipes were at once in evidence and then another rest followed. When the descent began, the drivers—most of them having removed their snowshoes that their feet might sink deeper into the snow—seized their trail-lines, and, acting as anchors behind the sleds, allowed themselves to be hauled stiff-legged through the deep snow in their effort to keep the sleds from over-running the dogs. It was exciting work. The men throwing their utmost weight upon the lines sought every obstruction, swerving against trees, bracing against roots,

grasping at branches, and floundering through bushes. Often they fell, and occasionally, when they failed to regain their footing, were mercilessly dragged downhill; the heavy sleds, gathering momentum, overtook the fleeing dogs, and their unfortunate masters were ploughed head-first through the snow. At the foot of the steepest incline a tumult arose as men and dogs struggled together in an effort to free themselves from overturned sleds. Above the cursing in French and English—but not in Indian—rose the howling of the dogs as lead-loaded lashes whistled through the frosty air. One wondered how such a tangle could ever be unravelled, but soon all was set straight again.

About eight o'clock we had our second breakfast and by twelve we stopped again for the noon-day meal, both of which consisted of bannock, pork, and tea. While we ate, the dogs, still harnessed, lay curled up in the snow.

Again the guide shouted "*Ma-r-r-che!*" and again the brigade moved forward. Some of the trains were handsomely harnessed, especially the Factor's. The loin-cloths of the dogs, called *tapis*, were richly embroidered and edged with fringe. Above the collars projected pompons of broken colours and clusters of streaming ribbons, while beneath hung a number of bells. All the dogs were hitched tandem, and every train was made up of four units. Except the dogs of the Factor's train, there were few real "huskies," as Eskimo dogs are called, for most of the brutes were the usual sharp-nosed, heavy-coated mongrels that in the Strong Woods Country go by the name of *giddes*; some, however, had been sired by wolves.

The track-beater's snowshoes, which were the largest used by any of the brigade, were Wood Cree "hunting shoes" and measured nearly six feet in length. The other men wore Chipewyan "tripping shoes" about three feet long—the only style of Canadian snowshoes that are made in "rights and lefts."

For a number of miles we passed through heavily timbered forest where shafts of sunlight threw patches of brilliant white upon the woodland's winter carpet, and where gentle breezes had played fantastically with the falling snow, for it was heaped in all manner of remarkable forms. Here and there long, soft festoons of white were draped about groups of trees where the living stood interlocked with the dead. Among the branches huge "snow-bosses" were seen, and "snow-mushrooms" of wondrous shape and bulk were perched upon logs and stumps. "Snow-caps" of almost unbelievable size were mounted upon the smallest of trees, the slender trunks of which seemed ready to break at any moment. It was all so strangely picturesque that it suggested an enchanted forest.

Early that afternoon we came upon an Indian lodge hiding in the woods, and from within came three little children. It was then fully twenty below zero, yet the little tots, wishing to watch the passing brigade, stood in the most unconcerned way, holding each other by the hand, their merry eyes shining from their wistful faces while their bare legs and feet were buried in the snow. Though they wore nothing but little blanket shirts, what healthy, happy children they appeared to be!

Then out upon a lake we swung where the wind-packed snow made easy going. Here the heavy sleds slid along as if loadless, and we broke into a run. On rounding a point we saw a band of woodland caribou trot off the lake and enter the distant forest. By the time we reached the end of the lake, and had taken to the shelter of the trees, dusk was creeping through the eastern woods and the rabbits had come out to play. They were as white as the snow upon which they ran helter-skelter after one another. Forward and backward they bounded across the trail without apparently noticing the dogs. Sometimes they passed within ten feet of us. The





Going to the stage, he took down his five-foot snowshoes, slipped his moccasined feet into the thongs, and with his gun resting in the hollow of his bemittened hand, and the sled's hauling-line over his shoulder, strode off through the vaulted aisles between the boles of evergreens; while through a tiny slit in the wall of his moose-skin home two loving eyes watched his stalwart figure vanishing among the . . . See Chapter IV



woodland seemed to swarm with them, and no wonder, for it was the seventh year, the year of Northland game abundance, when not only rabbits are most numerous, but also all the other dwellers of the wilderness that prey upon them. Already, however, the periodical plague had arrived. When I stopped to adjust a snowshoe thong I counted five dead hares within sight; next year starvation would be stalking the forest creatures.

#### CAMPING IN THE SNOW

While the sunset glow was rapidly fading, the brigade halted to make camp for the night. All were to sleep in the open, for dog brigades never carry tents but bivouac on the snow with nothing but a blanket between the sleeper and the *Aurora Borealis*—though the thermometer may fall to sixty below zero. Some of the men moved off with axes in their hands, and the sound of chopping began to echo through the forest. On every side big dry trees came crashing down. Then the huge “long fires”, driving darkness farther away, began to leap and roar. Then, too, could be seen the building of stages on which to place the valuable fur-laden sleds out of reach of the destructive dogs; the gathering of evergreen brush; the unhitching of dogs and the hanging up of their harness in the surrounding trees; the unloading of sleds; the placing of frozen whitefish to thaw for the dogs; the baking of bannocks, the frying of pork, and the infusing of tea. Then, in silence, the men ate ravenously, while the hungry dogs watched them.

When pipes had been filled and lighted each driver took his allotment of fish, called his dogs aside, and gave them a couple each. Some of the brutes bolted their food in a few gulps and rushed to seize the share of others, but a few blows from the drivers' whips drove them back.

When the dogs had devoured their day's rations—for they



are fed only once every twenty-four hours—their masters sought out sheltered spots for them and cut a few branches of brush for their beds. Some of the men cooked a supply of bannock to be eaten the following day. Others hung their moccasins, mittens, and leggings on little sticks before the fires to dry. It was an animated scene. The “long fires” were huge structures, twelve or fifteen feet in length, so that each man might bask in the heat without crowding his neighbour. A number stood with their back to the blaze while the rest sat or lounged on their blankets and, puffing away at their pipes, joined in the conversation that before long became general.

Just then the dogs began to blow and then to growl, as a strange Indian strode out of the gloom into the brilliant glare of the fires.

“*Wat-che! wat-che?*” (What cheer, what cheer?) sang out the men. The stranger replied in Cree, and then began a lively interchange of gossip. The Indian was the track-beater of the south-bound packet from the Far North that was now approaching. All were keenly interested. The cracking of whips and the howling of dogs were heard, and a little later the tinkling of bells. Then came a train of long-legged, handsomely harnessed dogs hauling a highly decorated carriage behind which trotted a strikingly dressed half-breed dog-driver. When the train had drawn abreast of our fire an elderly white man, who proved to be Chief Factor Thompson, of a still more northerly district of the Hudson’s Bay Company, got out from beneath the carriage robes, cheerfully returned our greeting, and accepted a seat on the dunnage beside Factor Mackenzie’s fire. Two other trains and two other dog-drivers immediately followed the arrival of the Chief Factor, for they were the packeteers in charge of the packet. Now the woods seemed to be full of talking and laughing men and snarling, snapping dogs. Twenty-two men were now crowding round the fires, and seventy-two

dogs and eighteen sleds were blocking the spaces between the trees.

## NORTHERN MAIL SERVICE

Chief Factor Thompson was the "real thing," and therefore not at all the kind of Hudson's Bay officer that one ever meets in fiction. For instead of being a big, burly, "red-blooded brute," of the "he-man" type of factor—the kind that springs from nowhere save the wild imaginations of the authors who have never lived in the wilderness . . . he was just a real man . . . just a fine type of Hudson's Bay factor, who was not only brother to both man and beast, but who knew every bird by its flight or song; who loved children with all his heart—flowers, too—and whose kindly spirit often rose in song. Yes, he was just a real man, like some of the men you know—but after all, perhaps he was even finer—for the wilderness does nothing to a man save make him healthier in body and in soul; while the cities are the world's cesspools. He was rather a small, slender man, with fatherly eyes set in an intelligent face that was framed with gray hair and gray beard.

After the Chief Factor and his men had been refreshed with bannock, pork, and tea, pipes were filled and lighted and for a time we talked of all sorts of subjects. Later, when we were alone for a little while, I found Mr. Thompson a man richly informed on northern travel, for he had spent his whole life in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, and at one time or another had been in charge of the principal posts on Hudson Bay, Great Slave Lake, and the Peace, the Churchill, the Athabasca, and the Mackenzie rivers. Among other subjects discussed were dogs and dog-driving; and when I questioned him as to the loading of sleds, he answered:

"Usually, in extremely cold weather, the Company allots dogs not more than seventy-five pounds each, but in milder weather they can handily haul a hundred pounds, and toward

spring, when sleds slide easily, they often manage more than that." Then dreamily puffing at his pipe he added: "I remember when six dog-trains of four dogs each hauled from Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca to Fort Vermillion on the Peace River loads that averaged six hundred and fifty pounds per sled—not including the grub for the men and dogs and the men's dunnage. Then, again, William Irving with Chief Factor Camsell's dogs brought to Fort Simpson a load of nine hundred pounds. The greatest load hauled by four dogs that I know of was brought to Fort Good Hope by Gaudet. When it arrived it weighed a trifle over one thousand pounds. But Factor Gaudet is one of the best dog-drivers in the country." Then, re-settling himself more comfortably before the fire, he continued:

"And while I think of it we have had some pretty fine dogs in the service of the Company. The most famous of all were certainly those belonging to my good friend Chief Factor Wm. Clark. He bred them from Scotch stag hounds and "huskies"—the latter, of course, he procured from the Eskimos. His dogs, however, showed more hound than husky. Their hair was so short that they had to be blanketed at night. Once they made a trip from Oak Point on Lake Manitoba to Winnipeg, starting at four o'clock in the morning, stopping for a second breakfast by the way, and reaching Winnipeg by one o'clock at noon, the distance being sixty miles. They were splendid dogs and great pets of his. They used to love playing tricks and romping with him. Frequently, when nearing a post, they would purposely dump him out of his carriole and leaving him behind, go on to the post, where, of course, on their arrival with the empty sled, they were promptly sent back for Mr. Clark. Understanding the command, they would at once wheel about and, without a driver, return on the full gallop to get their master. When coming upon him they would rush around and bark at him, showing all the while the greatest



glee over the trick they had played him. He never used a whip upon them. No snowshoer could be found who was swift enough to break a trail for those dogs and no horse ever overtook them. Once, while going from Oak Point to Winnipeg, Factor Clark's train ran down six wolves, allowing him to shoot the brutes as he rode in his carriage. Another time they overhauled and threw a wolf which Mr. Clark afterward stunned, and then bound its jaws together. When the brute came to, it found itself harnessed in the train in place of one of the dogs, and thus Chief Factor Clark drove a wild timber-wolf into the city of Winnipeg."

"They must have been wonderful dogs," remarked Father Jois, "but it's too bad they don't breed such dogs nowadays."

"That's so," returned the Chief Factor. "Twenty or thirty years ago at each of the big posts—the district depots—they used to keep from forty to fifty dogs, and at the outposts, from twenty to thirty were always on hand. At each of the district depots a man was engaged as keeper of the dogs and it was his duty to attend to their breeding, training, and feeding."

"Speaking of feeding, what do you consider the best food for dogs?" I asked.

"By all means pemmican," replied the Chief Factor, "and give each dog a pound a day. The next best rations for dogs come in the following order: two pounds of dried fish, four pounds of fresh deer meat, two rabbits or two ptarmigan, one pound of flour or meal mixed with two ounces of tallow. That reminds me of the way the old half-breed dog-drivers used to do. In such districts as Pelly and Swan River, where fish and other food for dogs was scarce, we had frequently to feed both men and dogs on rations of flour. Some of the half-breeds would leave their ration of flour with their family, and count on eating the dog's ration while on the trip and letting the poor brutes go hungry, just because the dogs belonged to the Company. So we put a stop to that by mixing

coal oil with the dog's rations and having them baked into cakes before the trip was begun. Such a mixture made the men sick when they tried to eat it, but the dogs didn't seem to mind it at all."

"Then kerosene is not included in the regular rations the Company supplies for its trippers and voyageurs?" I ventured, laughingly.

"Hardly, for in the Northland that would be rather an expensive condiment." The old gentleman smiled as he continued: "In outfitting our people for a voyage, we supply what is known as a full ration for a man, a half ration for a woman or a dog, and a quarter ration for a child. For instance, we give a man eight pounds of fresh deer meat per day while we give a woman or a dog only four pounds and a child two pounds. A man's ration of fish is four pounds per day, of pemmican two pounds, of flour or meal two pounds, of rabbits or ptarmigan four of each," said he, as he knocked the ashes from his pipe. I was afraid he was going to turn in, so I quickly asked:

"Which is the longest of the Company's packet routes at the present day?"

"That of the Mackenzie River packet from Edmonton to Fort Macpherson. In winter it is hauled two thousand and twelve miles by dog-train; and in summer it is carried by the Company's steamers on the Athabasca, the Slave, and the Mackenzie rivers. Next comes the Peace River packet from Edmonton to Hudson's Hope, a distance of over a thousand miles. In summer it goes by steamer, and in winter by dog-train. There's the York Factory packet from Winnipeg to Hudson Bay by way of Norway House, a distance of seven hundred miles. In winter it is hauled by dogs from Selkirk as far as Oxford House, and from there to York Factory by men with toboggans. In summer it is carried by canoe on Hay River and by steamboat on Lake Winnipeg. Then there's the Liard

River packet and the Reindeer Lake packet. Each travels about five hundred miles by dogs in winter and by canoe in summer. The Moose Factory packet from Temiscamingue to James Bay goes by canoe in summer, but by men in winter. All mails in and out from Hudson Bay or James Bay to or from the next post in the interior, are hauled by men. Dogs are seldom used on those routes, on account of the depth of the snow and the scarcity of dog feed."

Though I well knew that packeteers did not carry firearms, I asked Chief Factor Thompson—just for the sake of getting the truth from him and giving it to the public:

"How does the Hudson's Bay Company arm their packeteers?"

"Arm them?" the Chief Factor laughed outright, "why, we always provide them with an axe."

"Firearms, I mean."

"Firearms! Why, they aren't allowed to carry firearms at all. It's against the rules and regulations of the Company. In the first place, packeteers are supplied with plenty of grub for the trip; in the next place, if they had a gun they might go hunting and fooling around with it instead of attending to their business; and, moreover, it doesn't matter whether the mail travels two hundred or two thousand miles, there is no occasion for packeteers to carry firearms, for there are no highwaymen and no animals in this country that would make an offensive attack upon them."

And in truth, in all that wild brigade there were no firearms save Oo-koo-hoo's old muzzle-loader; but then The Owl was a hunter by profession, and he carried a gun only as a matter of business. Now for the last twenty-five years that is exactly what I have wanted to tell the public. When one reads a story, or sees a play or a moving picture, in which characters bristling with firearms are set forth as veritable representatives of life in the Canadian wilderness, he may rest assured that the



work is nothing but a travesty on life in Canada. Any author, any illustrator, any playwright, any scenario writer, any actor or any director who depicts Canadian wilderness life in that way is either an ignoramus or a shameless humbug. And to add strength to my statement I shall quote the experience of a gentleman who was the first City Clerk, Treasurer, Assessor, and Tax Collector of Dawson City—Mr. E. Ward Smith:

#### POLICE AND GUNMEN

“The Mounted Police generally received word in advance when any particularly bad character was headed for the Yukon, and in all such cases he was met when he slipped off the boat. I remember particularly one case of the kind, as I happened to be on hand when the American gunman landed. He was a quiet enough looking individual and had no weapons of any kind in sight, but a close scrutiny revealed the fact that he had a particularly evil eye in his sandy-freckled face. One of the Mounties picked him out unerringly and tapped him on the shoulder.

“‘Gat Gardiner?’ he asked.

“‘No,’ said the newcomer. ‘My name is Davidson.’

“‘I happen to know you as Gat Gardiner,’ insisted the policeman. ‘Got any weapons on you?’

“‘Leave go of me,’ flared the so-called Davidson, all the veneer of civility gone. ‘You got nothing on me. Let go, I say!’

“‘I’ve got something on you,’ declared the policeman, hauling a revolver from the hip pocket of the man. ‘Carrying concealed weapons is against the law on this side the line. Back on the boat, you, and don’t you dare put foot ashore or I’ll have you in jail. You go back the way you came.’

“And Gardiner went. I saw him leaning over the rail when the boat started on the return trip and he shook his fist at the

policeman on the wharf and emitted a string of vile oaths. But he never came back.

"When the notorious 'Soapy' Smith was killed at Skagway, Alaska, his gang of desperadoes was promptly broken up and word came to Dawson that some of them were headed for the Canadian side. They were gathered in as soon as they crossed the line, denuded of weapons, and sent back. Not one of the gang eluded the vigilance of the police.

"The law against carrying concealed weapons was a big factor in keeping the peace. Comparatively few men took advantage of their legal right to carry a revolver in sight. I remember seeing an open box in a pawnshop containing the most amazing collection of weapons I had ever set eyes on—revolvers with silver handles, pistols of carved ivory, antiquated breech-loaders, weapons of fantastic design, and, probably, of equally fantastic history, strange implements of death that had come from all climes and bespoke adventures on all the seven seas.

"'Where did you get the lot?' I asked the proprietor.

"'They all sell their shooting irons. No use for them here. I get 'em for practically nothing. Help yourself if you have any fancy that way. I'll make you a present of anything you want.'

"So much for the wild Yukon of the novelists! Instead of lurching into the dance hall and blazing away at the ceiling, picture the 'old-timer', the hardened miner of a hundred camps, planking down his pistols on the counter of the pawnshop and asking 'How much?' That's the truer picture."

As part of my boyhood education was derived from the study of American illustrated magazines, I was led by those periodicals to believe that the North American wilderness was inhabited by wild and woolly men bedecked with firearms, and ever since I have been on the lookout for just such characters. Now while I cannot speak for the Western States, I can at least

speaking for Canada; and I must now admit that, during my thirty-three years of contact with wilderness life, on one occasion—but on one only—I found that there was justification for describing the men of the northern wilderness as carrying firearms for protection. But does not the one exception prove the rule?

It happened near Stewart, on the borderline of Alaska, several years ago. I encountered a prospector who wanted to cross Portland Canal from Alaska to Canada, and as I was rowing over, I offered to take him across. When, however, he turned to pick up his pack I caught sight of something that fairly made me burst out laughing; for it was as funny a sight as though I had witnessed it on Piccadilly or Broadway. At first I thought he was a movie actor who, in some unaccountable way, had strayed from Los Angeles and become lost in the northern wilderness before he had had time to remove his ridiculous “make-up”; but a moment later he proved beyond doubt that he was not an actor, for he blushed scarlet when he observed that I was focussing a regular Mutt-and-Jeff dotted-line stare at a revolver that hung from his belt, and he faltered:

“But . . . Why the mirth?”

“Well, old man,” I laughed again, “for over twenty-five years I have been roaming the Canadian wilderness from the borderline of Maine right up here to Alaska, and in all that time—with the exception of the Constables of the North-West Mounted Police—you are the first man, woman, or child, I have seen carrying a revolver. And I swear, old dear, that that’s the truth. So now, do you wonder that I laugh?”

#### RECORD TRAVELLING

But to return to the Hudson’s Bay Company’s packet system, I asked Chief Factor Thompson:

“Which is the more important, the summer or the winter mail?”



"Oh, the winter; for, when inward bound, it bears the Commissioner's instructions to the district chief factors; and, when outward bound, it contains information regarding the results and the progress of the fur-trade, and orders for additional supplies."

"How many miles a day do the packeteers average on their winter trips?"

"Well," replied the Chief Factor, "I think the rate of speed maintained by our packeteers is remarkable; especially when one considers the roughness of the country, the hardships of winter travel, the fact that the men must make their bread, cook their meals, care for their dogs, and, when on the trail, cannot even quench their thirst without halting to build a fire and melt snow. Yet the packeteers of the Mackenzie River mail cover their two thousand miles on snowshoes at an average rate of twenty-seven and a half miles a day, including all stoppages."

"That is certainly splendid travelling. Some of the packeteers, I should judge, have made great records; haven't they?"

"Yes, that's true," acknowledged the trader, "the packeteers do make great efforts to break records between posts. But, though they may have succeeded in cutting down the time, their achievement is never mentioned on the way-bill, nor does it affect the time allowed for the completion of the trip; for, though the mail be brought in ahead of time, it is never handed over to the relay until the appointed hour has struck. Otherwise, the whole system would be thrown out of gear. Exceptionally fast runs are not shown upon the way-bills, because they would eventually affect the average time allowed for the trip; and in stormy weather that would be hard upon the packeteers. The time allowed for the transmission of a packet is calculated on a ten-years' average. No excuse for delay, except death, is tolerated. At each post on certain fixed dates relays of men and dogs are kept in readiness

to forward the mail without delay. A through way-bill accompanies every packet from point of departure to point of delivery. At each post along the route the time of arrival and the time of departure of the mail must be entered upon the way-bill, as well as the names of the packeteers and of the officers in charge."

"I understand that packets contain not only the despatches of the Company, but the private mail of the employees, that of missionaries of all denominations, that of chance 'explorers' or travellers, and even that of opposition fur-traders. Is that a fact?"

"Yes, sir, and moreover, no charge is made by the Company."

"Do the Company's officers experience much trouble in procuring men to act as packeteers?"

"Oh, no; none whatever. As a rule, when men enter the Company's service, they stipulate that they shall be given a place on the packet; for that affords them an opportunity to pay a visit to the next post, and to join in the dance which is always held on the arrival of the mail. Trippers consider themselves greatly honoured on being given charge of a packet; for it means that they are held to be trustworthy, and thoroughly familiar with the topography of the district."

"Before the advent of the railroad and the steamboat, which was the longest of the Company's packet routes?"

"By all odds that of the Yukon packet. It made the journey from Montreal to Fort Yukon, which was then situated at the junction of the Porcupine and Yukon rivers. It was routed by way of the Ottawa River, Lake Huron, Lake Superior, Lake of the Woods, Lake Winnipeg, the Athabasca River, the Slave River, and the Mackenzie River. It was forwarded in summer by canoe, in winter by dog-train, for the enormous distance of four thousand five hundred miles. And let me tell you, it is to-day, as it was two hundred years ago, the pride of the Company's people that not one packet was ever lost

beyond recovery. Packeteers have been drowned, frozen, burned, shot, smothered, and even eaten; but the packet has always reached its destination somehow."

#### BEAR HOLDS UP MAIL

A sudden burst of laughter from the men at a neighbouring fire attracted the attention of Chief Factor Thompson, and glancing over, he remarked to me:

"Telling yarns, eh! Let's go over and listen."

Twelve or fifteen men were crowded round that fire—including Factor Mackenzie, the Rev. Mr. Wilson, Father Jois, and Oo-koo-hoo—and they were now coaxing "Old Billy Brass" to tell the next story. He was a wiry little white man of about sixty who had seen much service in the Hudson's Bay Company. He hesitated. They clamoured again, and he began:

"But talkin' 'bout bears reminds me of a little affair I once had on the Peace River," said the old man, glancing slyly from the corner of his eye to see what effect his statement made upon his campfire companions. Billy was sitting cross-legged upon his caribou robe; and, as he turned the browning bannocks before the fire, he continued:

"Well, as I was sayin', me an' Old-pot-head's son once had a go with a great big black bear away up on the Peace River. But, don't you forget it, Billy Brass didn't lose the packet."

"Come, Billy, tell us all about it," coaxed the Chief Factor, well knowing that if he were once started there would be on his part little need of urging in order to extract from the old tripper all he knew, or could invent to suit the occasion.

"Well, gentlemen, if you ain't too sleepy, an' if some o' you boys'll watch the bannock, I don't mind tellin'," replied Billy as he leaned toward the fire, picked up a red-hot coal, and palmed it into his pipe.



"But I can't give a funny bear story, the same as you've been tellin', because all my experiences with bears have been mighty serious. However, I'll try and tell you 'bout me an Old-pot-head's son; an' to my mind it's the most serious of 'em all.

"As I was sayin', we was in charge of the Peace River packet; an' if it hadn't been for the charm Father La Mille blessed for me at Fort Good Hope, I don't know 's I'd be here to tell about it.

"Anyway, me an' Old-pot-head's son was carryin' the packet and headin' for Hudson's Hope. It was the fall packet, an'—as winter was just about due—we was hustlin' 'long for all we was worth, an' jabbin' holes in the river with our paddles as fast as we could, in fear o' the freeze up.

"As bad luck would have it, that very night the ice overtook us, an' we had to leave the canoe ashore an' finish the voyage afoot. Lucky for us, we was only about three-days' travel from the Fort, so we leaves our axe an' whatever we don't particular need with the canoe.

"Mile after mile we walks along the river bank; an' as we don't have no extra moccasins, our bare skin was soon upon the sand. What with havin' our duds torn by bushes, an' our fallin' in the mud once or twice, and several times a-wadin' creeks, we was a pretty sight when we stops to camp that night. When the sun went down, we was so tired that we just stopped dead in our tracks. We had been packin' our blankets, our grub, an' cookin' gear to say nothin' o' the packet; so, of course, we didn't give much thought to the campin' ground. But after supper I looks round an' sees that we'd made our fire down in a little hollow, an' that the place was bare o' trees 'ception three that stood in a row 'bout four lengths of a three-fathom canoe from our fire. The middle one was a birch with a long bare trunk, an' on each side stood a pine. Now, I want you gentlemen to pay perticler 'tention to just how they

stood; for them three trees is goin' to do a mighty lot o' figgerin' in this here story.

"As I was sayin', there was two pines with a birch in between, an' all standin' in a row, with the upper branches o' pines runnin' square in among the branches o' the birch. 'Bout half ways between the birch and the east pine, but a trifle off the line, was a pool o' water. Before I turns in for the night, I takes the packet an' sticks it on the end of a long pole, an' shoves it up against the birch tree, for fear o' the fire spreadin' an' burnin' up the mail.

"Me an' Old-pot-head's son turns in an' sleeps as sound as any trippers could. Some time in the night I wakes up with a mighty start that almost busts me heart. Somethin' was maulin' me. So, with me head still under the blanket, for I dassn't peep out, I sings out to the Injun an' asks him what in creation he's kickin' me for; an' if he couldn't wake me without killin' me. Old-pot-head's son yells back that he hasn't touched me. Then you bet I was scared; for the thing hauls off agen an' gives me a clout that knocks the wind plum' out o' me.

"Just then I heard Old-pot-head's son shout, 'Keep still, Bill, it's a big black bear.' I grabs the edges o' me blanket an' pulls 'em in under me so hard I thinks I've bust it. But the bear keeps on maulin' me, an' givin' me such hard swats that I began to fear it'd cave in me ribs."

"But, Billy, why didn't you shoot it?" asked the Reverend Mr. Wilson.

"Shoot? Why, your reverence, don't you know, packeteers never carries a gun?" the old man exclaimed with disgust, and then continued his story:

"Not content with that, the brute starts to roll me over an' over. An' all the time I'm doin' me best to play dead. Now you needn't laff. I'd like to see any o' youse pretendin' you was dead while a big bear was poundin' you that hard that you

begin to believe you ain't shammin'. An' when that ugly brute hauls off an' hits me agen, I decides then an' there that there's no occasion to sham it. But just as soon as I makes up my mind I'm dead, the bear leaves me; an' when I can no longer hear him breathin', I peeps out of a tiny little hole, and sees the big brute maulin' me old friend the Injun. Then I takes another peep roun', an' don't see no escape 'cept by way o' them three trees, so I just jumps up, an' lights out like greased lightnin' for the nearest tree. After me comes the bear gallopin'. I guess that was the quickest runnin' I ever done in all me life. I just managed to climb into the lower branches o' the west pine as the bear struck the trunk below me.

"When I stops for breath in the upper branches, I sees the old bear canterin' back agen to have another go with me pardner.

"Just as soon as I was safe, the whole performance struck me as bein' pretty funny, an' I couldn't help roarin' out and a-laffin' when I saw the beast maulin' Old-pot-head's son, an' him tryin' for all he was worth to play dead.

"Thinks I, I'll make me old friend laff. So I starts in to guy him, an' he begins to snicker, an' that makes the bear mad, an' he begins to roll the Injun. Then, you bet, I couldn't make him laff no more; for, what with shammin' dead, an' bein' frightened to death into the bargain, I don't think there was much laff left in him.

"You know how bears will act when they sometimes comes across a handy log? Well, that's just what the beast was doin' with Old-pot-head's son—it was rollin' him over an' over. The very next second it rolls his feet into the fire. Down the tree I slid, like snow down a mountain, an' stood at the foot of it an' pelted the bear with stones. The Injun's blanket began to smoke. It was no laffin' matter, for I knowed if I didn't drive the brute off in a jiffy Old-pot-head's son would be a comin'





As the wolf dashed away, the bounding clog sent the snow flying, and the hunter rushed in pursuit, while the beast dodged among the trees to escape a blow from Oo-koo-hoo. Then it bolted again, and ran for a few yards until the clog caught and held fast. The hunter, pressing on with raised axe, had no time to draw back when the brute sprang for him . . .

See Chapter IV



out of his trance mighty sudden an' that meant a catch-as-catch-can with a great, big, crazy black bear.

"As good luck would have it, the next time I threw a stone, it landed on the tip of the bear's snout, an' with a snarl he comes for me. I waits as long as I dares, then up the tree I skips, with the brute follerin' me. About half ways up I thinks I hears a human bein' laffin' in the east pine. So I looks over, an' sure enuff, I sees me old pardner settin' on a limb an' fairly roarin'. All the same, I was feelin' mighty squeemish, for the bear was comin' up lickety splinter after me.

"Just then I spies a good stout branch that reaches out close against a big limb of the birch, an' I crawls over. As the bear follers me, I slides down the trunk o' the birch, an' lights out for the east pine where me pardner was doin' the laffin'. On its way down the bear rammed itself right smack against the mail-bag; and when the beast struck ground, it smelt the man smell on the packet, an' began to gnaw it.

"Now me an' Old-pot-head's son knowed well enuff we had to save the mail-sack, so I slips down the east pine a ways, an' breaks off dead branches, an' pelts them at the bear while the Injun crosses over into the top o' the west pine. Then we both at once slides down as low as we dares, an' I begins to lamm the brute with a shower o' sticks. Up the tree it comes for me, while me pardner slips down, grabs the mail-sack, an' sails up the west pine again.

"That was a mighty clever move, thinks I, but a bag is an orkad thing to portage when you're meanderin' up an' down a tree with a bear after you. But the tump-line was on it, just as we carried it the day before, so it wasn't as bad as it might 'a' been.

"Well, when I went up the east pine, the bear follered, an', as there wasn't any too much room between me an' the bear, I crosses over into the birch an' slides down its slippery trunk as tho' it was greased. I hits the ground a little harder than



I wanted to, but didn't waste no time in lightin' out for the west pine, where the Injun was restin'; an' all the time the bear was tryin' to grab me coat-tails.

"It was just a case of up to the west pine, cross over and down the birch; then up the east pine, cross over an' down the birch; then up the west pine, cross over an' down the birch, till we got so dizzy we could a hardly keep from fallin'. If you could just 'a' seen the way we tore roun' through them trees, I'll bet you would 'a' done a heap o' laffin'.

"The bear was mighty spry in goin' up, but when it came to goin' down he'd just do the drop-an'-clutch, drop-an'-clutch act. That's just where me an' me pardner had the advantage on the brute; for we just swung our arms an' legs roun' that birch an' did the drop act, too; but, somehow, we hadn't time to do the clutch, so our coat-tails got badly crushed every time we landed.

"It was a kind of go-as-you-please until about the tenth roun', when I accidentally drops the mail-bag on the bear's head, an' that makes him boilin' mad; so he lights out after us as tho' he had swallowed a hornet's nest.

"Then away we goes up an' down, up an' down, an' roun' an' roun' that perpendicular race track, until we made such a blur in the scen'ry that any fool with half an eye an' standin' half a mile away could 'a' seen a great big figger eight layin' on its side in the middle o' the landscape. We took turns at carryin' the packet, but sometimes I noticed Old-pot-head's son was havin' a good deal of trouble with it. It didn't seem to bother him much when he was climbin' up; for he just swung it on his back with the loop o' the tump-line over his head, an' so he had his hands free. But it was when he was comin' down the slippery birch that the weight of the bag made him rather more rapid than he wanted to be; an' so, when he an' the bag struck groun', they nearly always bounced apart; an' if the Injun failed to get his feet in time to ketch the sack on the first bounce,

I ketched it on the second bounce as I glode by. So between the two of us we managed to hang on to the packet.

“By-an’-by, we was gettin’ terribly tuckered out. It was a good thing for us that the bear was gettin’ winded an’ dizzy as well; because, at about the sixty-seventh roun’, the brute had no sooner gone down the birch than he bounded up agen just when Old-pot-head’s son was a-climbin’ thro’ the upper branches o’ the birch. So he slips over into the top o’ the east pine, while I stays in the top o’ the west pine, an’ the bear sits down in a upper crotch o’ the birch.

“Well, we puts in a good many heats of anywhere from twenty-five to seventy-five laps roun’ that track by the time daylight comes, an’ sunrise finds us all ketching our wind in the upper branches. I noticed that whenever the brute wanted to stop the whirligig it always climbed up the birch just in time to separate me an’ me pardner; an’ there we would sit, me in the west pine, me pardner in the east pine, an’ the black brute right in between.

“About breakfast time me an’ the Injun was feelin’ mighty hungry. There we sat cussin’ our luck an’ castin’ longin’ glances down at the grub bag. By the time I’d caught me wind a great idea strikes me. Durin’ the next heat I would rush out. So I sings out my intentions to me pardner; an’ he says he thinks we can do it. So while he was carryin’ Her Majesty’s mail I was to try an’ grab the grub bag.

“We got ready, an’ dropped down them pines so fast that we both hits groun’ before the bear knows what’s doin’. Then I leaves that tree like as if all the animals in the woods was after me. I got on so much speed that by the time I grabs the grub bag I was goin’ so fast that I couldn’t turn roun’ without slackin’ down. That’s where I loses a terrible amount o’ time, an’ I was beginnin’ to think it was all up with me. By the time I got headed roun’ agen for the tree, I sees that the bear is comin’ down with his back to me. When he hits groun’ he sees

the Injun dancin' roun' the foot o' the west pine; so he makes for the redskin, an' chases him up while I climbs the east pine.

"Then we all went roun' an' roun' for maybe fifty laps, an' the way we wore the bark off them trees an' trod down the grass between 'em was a caution. By-an'-by the bear gets so dizzy that he bucks up the birch agen, an' sure enuff that stops the performance.

"I didn't need any breakfast bell to remind me to open the grub bag. I just reaches in an' pulls out some busted bannock an' throws a chunk over to Old-pot-head's son, an' without even sayin' grace, we starts in. Every little while I'd toss another chunk of bread over to me pardner an' just out o' sheer spite I'd chuck it so that it would go sailin' thro' the air right in front o' the bear's snout. That makes him mad. So he tried to catch the stuff as it flies by; but I just puts on a little more curve, an' that makes him madder still, an' he ups an' comes for me.

"Then we all knocks off breakfast an' goes for another canter. But it don't do no good, 'ceptin' that we all gets puffed out agen. After a bit, the bear stops to ketch his breath, an' then me an' me pardner goes on with our breakfast.

"With the bear exercisin' us the way he did, we had to take our breakfast in a good many courses. That makes it so long drawn out that we gets mighty thirsty. The Injun asks me if the cups is in the grub bag. I puts me han' in an' feels, but they ain't there. Then I remembers that we left them down by the fire. We didn't either of us care to risk snakin' a cup, so I tells me pardner that the next time we goes roun' we'd best try an' grab a handful o' water. We didn't have long to wait, for the bear soon gets another move on; an' then away we all goes sailin' roun' agen. Every time me an' the Injun canters past the pool, we just makes a sudden dip an' grabs up a handful o' water an' throws it in.



“It took so much exercise to get so little water that I thought I’d die of thirst while I was tryin’ to drink me fill. When the bear caught on to what we was doin’, it just made him madder an’ madder; an’ he lights out after us at such a breathless clip that we had to fairly gallop up them pines, an’ slide down the birch faster than ever. It wasn’t long before nearly every button was wore off, an’ our clothes was so ripped up an’ torn down that I’d blush every time I’d ketch the bear lookin’ at me. An’ every time we ran ’long the groun’ from one tree to another, me an’ me pardner had to use both hands on our garments in order to keep up our—er—respectability. However, the bear didn’t have the laff on us altogether, for he had gone up an’ down them trees so often an’ so fast that he had worn all the hair off his stomach.

“After a while we all gets tuckered out agen; an’ while we rests in the trees me an’ me pardner talks about the weather, lettin’ on that there ain’t no bear anywheres nigh. So the time passed. As we didn’t recollect just how much grub we had at the start, or how much water there was in the pool first off, we couldn’t for the life of us reckon just how long we’d been there. Neither me nor Old-pot-head’s son would care to take our oaths whether we’d been there a night an’ half a day, or half a dozen nights an’ days; the night time an’ the day time was so mixed up together that we hadn’t time to separate ’em. We were sure, tho’, that our grub was givin’ out, the water was dryin’ up, an’ death was gettin’ good an’ ready for us.

“We was in such a terrible tight place that I begins to think o’ takin’ off me shirt an’ flyin’ it from the top o’ the tallest pine as a signal o’ distress; for we was worse off than if we’d been shipwrecked. Talk about bein’ cast adrift on a raft! Why, it wasn’t in it with bein’ fixed the way we was. We just stayed in one spot with no chance of ever driftin’ to’rds help. As long as the bear kept tab on us there wasn’t no sign of our ever gettin’ a wink o’ sleep. And more, besides starvin’ to death,

we had to face bein' frozen; for our clothes was all wore off, an' winter was comin' on mighty fast.

"At last, when me an' Old-pot-head's son had about given up hope, an' was just pickin' out which would be the easiest death, what should we see but somethin' bobbin' in an' out among the bushes. Say, it was another bear! When it comes a little closer, we makes out it was a little lady bear. No sooner does our old stern-chaser spy her than he slides down to the groun', an' risin' up on his hind legs, throws out his chest, an' cocks his eye at her, for all the world like a man when he sees a pretty girl comin' his way. But when her dainty little ladyship ketches sight of his bald-headed stomach, she just tosses up her nose with disgust, an' wheels roun' an' makes for the tall timbers with our affectionate friend limp in the best he can after her.

"An' that's the last we sees o' the bear that tried to hold up the Company's packet."

After the laughter had died down, Chief Factor Thompson yawned:

"Well, gentlemen, it's getting on. I must be turning in or my men will be late in getting under way in the morning."

#### GOD AND THE WILD MEN

Drowsiness had indeed overtaken the camp. But now I must digress a moment to tell you something that the public—at least the public that has derived its knowledge of northern wilderness life from fiction—may find it hard to believe. And this is what I want to say: that every one in that whole brigade of wild men of the wilderness, from the lowest dog-driver right up to the Chief Factor—when each had fixed his bed in readiness for the night—knelt down, and with bowed head, said his evening prayer to The Master of Life. Moreover, the fact that two clergymen were present had nothing whatever to do with it,

for the "barbarians" of the forest would have done just the same had no priest been there—just as I have seen them do scores and scores of times. In fact, in some sections of the forest the native wilderness man—red, white, or half-breed—who does not, is not the rule, but the exception. Then, too—unless one's ears are closed to such sounds—one may occasionally hear the voyageurs of the "North canoe" and the "York boat" brigades, while straining on the tracking line, singing, among other hymns:

Onward, Christian soldiers,  
Marching as to war,  
With the Cross of Jesus,  
Going on before.

And, furthermore, I wonder if the fiction-reading public will believe that the majority of the men in the fur brigades always partake of the holy sacrament before departing upon their voyages? Nevertheless, it is the truth—though of course truth does not agree with the orgies of gun-play that spring from the weird imaginations of the stay-at-home authors, who, in their wild fancy, people the wilderness with characters from the putrescence of civilization. It is time these authors were enlightened, for a man, native to the wilderness, is a better man . . . more honest, more chivalrous, more generous, and—at heart, though he talks less about it—more God-respecting . . . than the man born in the city. That is something the public should never forget; for if the public remembers that, then the authors of wilderness stories will soon have to change their discordant tune.

Yes, it is true, every one of those wild men said his evening prayer and then, with his blanket wrapped about him, lay down upon his thick, springy mattress of fir-brush, with his feet toward the fire, and slumbered as only a decent, hard-working



man can. Out among the dancing shadows that flitted among the snow-mantled bushes and heavily laden trees a hundred and fifty eyes glared in the brooding darkness—as though all the wolves in the forest were gathering there. Later, when the sound of heavy breathing was heard round the fires, a fierce, wolfish-looking dog, bolder than the rest, left its snowy bed to hunt for more sheltered quarters. There was a whine, a snarl, then the sound of clashing teeth. In a moment every dog leaped up with bristling hair. Instantly bedlam reigned. Over seventy dogs waged the wildest kind of war and the distant woods reëchoed the horrible din. A dozen blanketed mounds rose up, and many long lashes whistled through the air. The seething mass broke away and flew howling and yelping into outer darkness followed by a roar of curses—but only in civilized tongues.

Presently all was still again. The men lay down, and the dogs, one by one, came slinking back to their resting places. But in a couple of hours one of the half-frozen brutes silently rose up, cautiously stepped among the sleeping men, and lay couched close to a smouldering fire. Another followed and then another until most of the dogs had left their beds. Growing bolder, a couple of the beasts fought for a warmer spot. In their tussle they sprawled over one of the men, but a few lusty blows from a handy frying-pan restored calm. As the night wore on some of the dogs, not contented with sleeping beside the men, curled up on top of their unconscious masters. Then for hours nothing but the heavy breathing and snoring in camp and the howling of distant wolves was heard. Slumber had at last overtaken the wild men of the wilderness—who always made it a rule to kneel down every night, and ask God to bless their little children at home.

Now, though time still sped on, silence possessed the forest—until:

“Hurrah, *mes bons hommes! Levey, levey, levey!* Up, up

up, up, up!" ending in a shrill yell from the guide startled the drowsy crew. It was three o'clock in the morning. Had it not been for the brilliancy of the Northern Lights all would have been in darkness. An obscure form bent over an ash-bed and fumbled something. A tiny blaze appeared and rapidly grew until the surrounding forest was aflame. Over the fires frying-pans sizzled, while tea-pails heaped with snow began to steam. A hurried breakfast followed. The sleds were packed. The dogs, still curled up in the snow, pretended to be asleep.

"Cæsar! Tigre! Cabri! Whiskey! Tête Noire! Pilot! Michinass! Coffee! Bull! Brandie! Caribou!" shouted the men. A few of the dogs answered to their names and came to harness while some holding back were tugged forward by the scruff of the neck. Others were still in hiding. The men searched among the mounds and bushes. Every now and then the crack of a whip and the yelp of a dog announced the finding of a truant. Two trackers on large snowshoes had already gone ahead to break the trail. It was easy to follow their tracks though the woods were still in darkness and remained so for several hours. At dawn Oo-koo-hoo and our little outfit parted company with the Dog Brigade. Already the packet was many miles ahead. As I turned on my western way, I thought of the work of these postmen of the wilderness, of the hardships they endured, and the perils they braved; and the Chief Factor's assertion that no packet had ever been lost beyond recovery, recalled to mind other stories that were worth remembering: For instance, a canoe express was descending the Mackenzie River; the canoe was smashed in an ice jam, and the packeteers were drowned. A few weeks later passing Indians caught sight of a stick bobbing in the surface of the stream. Though the water was deep and the current was running at the rate of three miles an hour, the stick remained in the same place. So the Indians paddled over to investigate. They found that to the floating stick was fastened a

long thong, which on being pulled up brought the missing packet to light.

Again, while making camp near the Athabasca River, the packeteers had slung the packet in a tree, the usual place for it while in camp. During the night their fire spread and burned up the whole equipment except the tree, which, being green, received little more than a scorching. The packet was unharmed.

On Great Slave Lake during a fierce snowstorm the packeteers became separated from their dogs, and were frozen to death. But the packet was recovered.

In one autumn two packeteers journeying from George's River Post to Ungava Post drew up their canoe on a sandy beach, and camped beneath a high, overhanging bank. During the night the bank gave way and buried them as they slept. When the ice formed, the trader at Ungava sent out two men to search for the missing packet. They found the canoe on the beach; and from the appearance of the bank, conjectured what had happened. Next spring the landslide was dug into, and the packeteers were found both lying under the same blanket, their heads resting upon the packet.



## VI WILD ANIMALS AND MEN

### WOLVERINE AND HUNTER

ONE evening, while sitting before the fire in Oo-koo-hoo's lodge, we heard sounds that told us that Amik had returned, and presently he entered the tepee, full of wrath over the havoc a wolverine had wrought along his trapping path. The pelts of more dead game had been ruined; deadfalls had been broken; and even some of his steel traps had been carried away. There and then Oo-koo-hoo decided that he would drop all other work and hunt the marauder.

For its size—being about three feet in length and from twelve to eighteen inches high—the wolverine is an amazingly powerful creature. In appearance it somewhat resembles a small brown bear. Though it is not a fast traveller its home range may cover anywhere from five to fifty miles. It feeds upon all sorts of small game, and has been known to kill even deer. It mates about the end of March, dens in any convenient earthen hole or rocky crevice or cave that may afford suitable shelter; and it makes its bed of dry leaves, grass, or moss. The young, which number from three to five, are born in June. Whenever necessary, the mother strives desperately to protect her young, and is so formidable a fighter that even though the hunter may be armed with a gun, he runs considerable risk of being injured by the brute. It has been known to take possession of the carcass even of a caribou and to stand off the hunter who had just shot it. Also, it has been known to drive a wolf, and even a bear, away from their quarry.

The superstitious Indian not only believes that the wolverine is possessed of the devil—for it is the most destructive animal in the northern world—but he considers it also to be endowed with great intelligence. The wily Indian, however, knowing the animal's habit of trying to destroy what it cannot carry away, takes advantage of that very fact and hunts it accordingly.

All that has been said in relation to trapping the fox applies also to *le Carcajou*—i. e., the wolverine—save that the trap chain should be doubled, and everything else made stronger and heavier in proportion to the wolverine's greater size and strength. That evening Oo-koo-hoo talked much of wolverines.

"My son, no other animal surpasses it in devilish cunning. For it is not content to merely spring a trap, but it will carry it away—more often for a short distance, but sometimes for miles—and hide or bury it. Later on the wolverine may visit it again, carry it still farther away and bury it once more. The wolverine has good teeth for cutting wood, and will sometimes free a trap from its clog by gnawing the pole in two. My son, I have even known a wolverine go to the trouble of digging a hole in which to bury a trap of mine; but just in order to fool me, the beast has filled up the hole again, carried the trap to another place, and there finally buried it. But as a good hunter is very observant, he is seldom fooled that way, for the wolverine, having very short legs, has difficulty in keeping both the chain and the trap from leaving tell-tale marks in the snow.

"Yes, my son, the wolverine is a very knowing brute, and if he thinks he may be trailed, he will sometimes—without the slightest sign of premeditation—jump sideways over a bush, a log, or a rock, in order to begin, out of sight of any trailer, a new trail; or he may make a great spring to gain a tree, and ascend it without even leaving the evidence of freshly fallen bark. Then, too, he may climb from tree to tree, by way of the interlocking branches, for a distance of a hundred paces or more,

all the while carrying the trap with him. Then, descending to the ground, he may travel for a considerable distance before eventually burying the trap. I have known him even leave a trap in a tree, but in that case it was not done from design, for signs proved that the chain had been caught upon a branch."

"How many wolverines," I asked, "do you suppose are causing all the trouble on your and Amik's trapping paths?"

"Only one, my son, for even one wolverine can destroy traps and game for twenty or thirty miles around; and the reason the brute is so persistent in following a hunter's fur path is that it usually affords the wolverine an abundance of food. Then, when the hunter finds the brute is bent on steady mischief, it is time for him to turn from all other work and hunt the thief. If at first steel traps fail, he may build special dead-falls, often only as decoys round which to set, unseen, more steel traps in wait for the marauder.

"If a hunter still fails, he may sit up all night in wait for the robber, knowing that the more stormy the night, the better his chance of shooting the brute. Sometimes, too, I have found a wolverine so hard to catch that I have resorted to setting traps in the ashes of my dead fires, or beneath the brush I have used for my bed, while camping upon my trapping path." Then he added with a twinkle about his eye and a shake of his finger: "But, my son, I have another way and I am going to try it before the moon grows much older."

I asked him to explain, but he only laughed knowingly, so I turned the subject by asking:

"Does an animal ever eat the bait after it is caught?"

"No, my son, no animal ever does that, not even if it be starving, but it may eat snow to quench its thirst. Animals, however, do not often starve to death when caught in traps, but if the weather be very severe, they may freeze in a single night. If, however, the beast is still alive when the hunter arrives, the prisoner will in most cases feign death in the hope



of getting free. That is true of most animals, and, furthermore, it will feign death even when other animals approach; but then, more often, its purpose is to secure the advantage of making a sudden or surprise attack."

An Indian named Larzie, who was engaged to hunt meat for the priests at Fort Resolution, once came upon a wolverine in one of his traps that had done that very thing and won the battle, too. The snow, the trap, and the carcass of a wolf, silently told Larzie every detail of the fight. The wolverine, having been caught by the left hind leg, had attempted by many means to escape, even trying to remove the nuts from the steel trap with its teeth, as well as trying to break the steel chain, and gnaw in two the wooden clog to which the trap was fastened. But before accomplishing this, the wolverine had spied a pack of five wolves approaching. In an effort to save its life the wolverine worked itself down low in the snow and there lay, feigning death. The cautious wolves, on sighting the wolverine, began circling about, each time drawing a little nearer. Still suspicious, they sat down to watch the wolverine for a while. Then they circled again, sat down once more, and perhaps did a little howling, too. Then they circled again, each time coming closer, until at last, feeling quite sure the wolverine was dead, one of the wolves, in a careless way, ventured too near. No doubt it was then that the wolverine, peeping through his almost closed eyelids, had seen his chance—that the nearest wolf was now not only within reach, but off guard, too—for the snow gave evidence of a sudden spring. The wolverine had landed upon the back of the wolf, clung on with his powerful forelegs, and not only ripped away at the wolf's belly with the long, sharp claws of his free hind foot, but with his terrible jaws had seized the wolf by the neck and chewed away at the spinal cord. Then, no doubt, the other wolves, seeing their comrade overpowered and done to death, had turned away and left the scene of battle. Later, Larzie

had arrived, and after killing the wolverine and skinning both the conquerer and the conquered, had lighted his pipe and leisurely read every detail of the story in that morning's issue of the forest publication called *The Snow*.

Next morning, when I turned out before breakfast, I found that Oo-koo-hoo had left camp before daylight; and half the afternoon passed before he returned. That evening he explained that during the previous night, the thought of the wolverine having haunted him and spoilt his rest, he had decided on a certain plan, risen before dawn, and started upon the trail. Now he was full of the subject, and without my asking, described what he had done. Securing a number of fish hooks—trout size—he had wired them together, enclosed them in the centre of a ball of grease which he had placed inside an old canvas bag, and fastened there with the aid of wires attached to the hooks. Then, carrying the bag to where he found fairly fresh wolverine signs, he had dropped it upon the trail as though it had accidentally fallen there. The wolverine, he explained, would probably at first attempt to carry away the bag, but on scenting the grease it would paw the bag about; then, upon discovering the opening, it would thrust its head inside, seize the ball of grease in its mouth, and start to pull it out. "If that should happen," commented Oo-koo-hoo, "the wolverine would never leave that spot alive; it would just lie there and wait for me to come and knock it on the head."

But now at last—as later events proved—Oo-koo-hoo, the great hunter, had encountered his match. Now it was no longer an unequal contest, for now two could play at cunning—especially when both were masters at the game. Three times The Owl visited his latest wolverine trap, only to learn that twice the brute had inspected it and spurned it, for its tracks proved that caution had kept the animal more than five feet away. Later, as the winter wore on, the subject of wolverines

was rarely mentioned as it did not add to the cheerfulness of Oo-koo-hoo's otherwise happy mood.

#### THE BEST FOOT-GEAR

About a week later, with a few days' outfit loaded upon our sled, Oo-koo-hoo and I were heading first for the Moose Hills where we were to hunt moose, and if successful, to cache the meat where Granny and the boys could find it; then continuing farther north we were to call upon The Owl's sister to deliver her a present from the children of Oo-koo-hoo. In the meantime, Amik had gone upon one of his trapping paths, and the boys were off to a swampy region to examine deadfalls set for mink and fisher. The boys had taken the dogs with them.

It was a fine, cold, sunny morning when Oo-koo-hoo and I set out upon our hunt, and with every breath we seemed to be drinking ærial champagne that made us fairly tingle with the joy of living—for such is the northern air in winter time. As we snowshoed along I felt thankful for the excellent socks with which the old hunter had provided me. On the last hunt my snowshoe thongs had blistered my feet, but now, thanks to Oo-koo-hoo, I was shod with the most perfect foot-gear for winter travel I have ever known—a natural sock that was both blister- and cold-proof. I had never heard of it before, but The Owl assured me that it had been long in fashion among the Indians. On each foot I was now wearing next my bare skin a rabbit pelt—minus legs and ears—put on, hair side out, while the skin was still green and damp, and then allowed to dry and shape itself to the foot. Over the rabbit pelts I wore my regular woollen socks, duffel neaps, and caribou-skin mitten moccasins. The pelts had been removed from the rabbits by simply cutting them between the hind legs, and then peeling them off inside out. With the inside of the skin next the foot blisters never form, nor does the hair wear off and ball up under





*"There's the York Factory packet from Hudson Bay to Winnipeg, a distance of seven hundred miles. In winter it is hauled by dogs between Selkirk and Orford House, but between the latter post and York Factory it is hauled by men with toboggans. All mails in and out from Hudson Bay to or from the next post in the interior are hauled by men. Dogs are seldom used on those routes, on account of . . ."* See Chapter V



the foot in such a way that it may hurt the wearer. Though the rabbit pelt is very tender and tears easily, it can be worn for five or six days of hard travel. For warmth and comfort it is unexcelled.

Early that afternoon we came upon many lynx tracks, evidently there had been a "pass of lynxes" as the hunters call it, for lynxes have a way of gathering in bands of about four to eight and passing through the forest. Oo-koo-hoo stated that they migrated in that way from one region to another, covering many miles in search of game, especially during the years when the rabbit plague causes a great shortage of food; and had he known of their presence in time, he would have cut big heaps of poplar, birch, and willow branches to attract the rabbits, and thus furnish more food for the lynxes. Hoping, however, that he was not too late, he set what few snares he had; nevertheless, he regretted that the boys had gone off with the dogs, for, if they had not, he would have tried to trail and tree the lynxes.

The boys had taken the dogs because they wanted them to haul their sled. It was, however, against the advice of their grandfather, for he had admonished them that only white men and half-breeds would use dogs to haul a sled on a trapping path; that a good hunter would never do such a foolish thing, and for many reasons: the traps—being usually set close to the path—were apt to be either set off or destroyed by the swinging sled; besides, the dogs' tracks would obliterate the tracks of game; also the dogs might be caught in the traps; furthermore, the smell of dogs always inspired fear in animals, again, the noise of driving dogs frightened the game away. So, according to Oo-koo-hoo, the wise hunter either packs his load upon his back, or, by himself, hauls it upon his sled. But one must remember that The Owl was an Ojibway and that those Indians as well as the Saulteaux Indians prefer to haul their own sleds on the hunting trail and to keep their dogs solely



for trailing game; though all other Indians of the Strong Woods use their dogs for hauling sleds. One advantage of the Ojibway custom is that hunting dogs—when running loose—never have to be fed.

Amik, however, being a rather shiftless fellow, often spoilt his boys as much as the average white father spoils his, for he never thrashed them, though they frequently deserved it, and having given in to them on many previous occasions, he had now let them take the dogs. But speaking of parents' treatment of children, even an old she-bear could give many a civilized father or mother pointers on how to bring up children, for even among animals and birds one frequently finds a model parent.

According to the verdict of the old fur-traders, the best trapper is the uncivilized Indian. Though, apparently, he does not derive the same amount of sport from his work as the white man does, he never shirks his work and always takes great pains to prepare for and perfect the setting of his traps. Though he is slow, he is, nevertheless, sure and deadly in his work. Oo-koo-hoo assured me that the secret of successful hunting was intelligence, caution, and patience.

During December and January, or according to the Indians, Yeyekoopewe Pesim—"The Rime Moon," and Kakisapowatukinum—"The Moon When Everything Is Brittle," there is always a lull in the trapping, for the reason that then the days are shorter and the weather colder, and on that account and also on account of the fact that the sun and winds of March have not arrived to harden the deep soft snow, the forest creatures prefer to remain more at home.

#### APPROACHING MOOSE

In approaching the Moose Hills we saw many moose tracks, but they were old, the freshest having been made two days

before. The age of these the hunter was able to determine from the amount of newly fallen snow in the track, as well as from other conditions; for he well remembered how much snow had fallen each day for the last week or two, when and which way the wind had blown, and when the sun was strong and the cold severe. Now selecting a two-day-old trail as the best for us to follow, he decided to camp for the night, and we spent the interval between supper and bedtime discussing not only the hunting of moose, but also their range and habits.

The extreme range of a moose covers from five to fifteen miles. More often it is confined to a much smaller area that merely includes the low-lying river and lake valleys that afford him the choicest of summer food—the pineapple-like roots of waterlilies—and also affords him protection from flies while he is wading and delving for those very roots; and the higher lands among the hills, where he spends the winter in the denser forest.

But it is in midsummer that we can study the moose with greatest ease, for then he spends the sunrises and sunsets wading among the lily pads, and if we are careful to observe the direction of the wind to guard against being scented, and also careful to cease paddling or any other motion before the big brute looks at us, we may, with the greatest ease and safety, propel our canoe to within from a hundred yards to fifty or forty feet of the great beast as he stands looking at us with raised head and dilating nostrils trying to catch our scent. If he catches it, he suddenly tosses his ponderous head, drops back slightly on his hind legs as he swings round, and is off with a grunt. Nevertheless, he—or she—will pause long enough to leave the sign that all deer leave upon the ground when suddenly startled by—to them—the dreadful smell of human beings. Or if it happens to be moonlight and the moose is a bit mystified by the steady, but silent, scentless, and motionless approach of our canoe, he may at first stand gazing at us, then

grunt at us, then back out of the water up on to the bank and there stand, not fifty feet away, towering above us—for he may measure from six to seven feet at the shoulder and weigh three quarters of a ton—shaking his great antlers and grunting, or perhaps, more properly speaking, *barking* at us while he stamps his big fore hoofs until he shakes the very river bank.

How children love to take part in such sport! How they thrill over such an experience! Many a time I have taken them right up to even the largest of bulls until the little tots could look into the very eyes of the greatest of all living deer. What fine little hunters, too, they made, never speaking, not even in a whisper; never moving—save only their eyelids. In fact, I have been so close to wild moose that on one occasion I could have spanked a huge bull with my paddle. He was standing belly-deep in the river with his head under water, and so close did my canoe glide past him that I had to turn it to prevent it from running in between his hind legs. It was the sound of turning aside the canoe that brought his head up, and when he beheld the cause, he lunged forward and trotted away leaving a great wake of surging foam behind him. His head, crowned with massive antlers, was a ponderous affair. His body was as large as that of a Shire stallion and his back just as flat, while his legs were very much longer. He was the largest moose I have ever seen—and yet, by leaning slightly toward him, I could have spanked him with my paddle! One such experience with a great, wild animal, is more adventure-some, more thrilling and more satisfactory, than the shooting of a hundred such creatures. It is more than the sport of kings—it is the sport of men of common sense.

On another occasion, at Shahwandahgooze, in Quebec, in broad daylight, I paddled a friend of mine right in between three bulls and a cow, and there we rested with moose on three sides of us. They were standing in a semicircle and no one of



them was more than fifty paces away. They were unusually fine specimens and had the bulls been triplets they could not have been more alike even to the detail of their antlers. The cow paid little attention to us and went on feeding while the bulls, with heads held much higher than usual, stood as though in perfect pose for some sculptor. There wasn't a breath of wind and the wondrous spell must have lasted from eight to ten minutes; then a faint zephyr came and carried our tell-tale scent to them and they wheeled round and trotted away. Yet the head hunter from the city, who usually stands off at long range and fires at the first sight of game, will argue that killing is the greatest sport; when in truth it requires greater courage and greater skill to approach, unarmed, so close to game that one may touch it with a fish pole, and the reward is a much greater and a more satisfactory thrill than the head hunter ever gets from lying off at long range with a high-powered rifle and utterly destroying life. Furthermore, think of how much better one can study natural history by observing live animals in action, rather than motionless ones in death! An artist, in his effort to render a perfect portrait of a human being, never murders his sitter, as the so-called "sportsman-naturalist" does. It seems to me that if sportsmen were more active, more skilful, and more courageous, they would give up slaughtering animals and birds for the sake of the unbounded pleasure and adventure of observing wild game at closer quarters; but in truth, long experience has taught me that the average hunter from the city is something of a coward—never daring to walk alone in the forest without his trusty, life-destroying machines.

But if those same hunters would only take a little more interest in nature, pluck up a little more courage, and remember that the wild animals of the northern forest are less vicious—when unmolested—than are many of the tame animals of civilization, how much more sane they would be. Re-

member, it is much safer to approach the great bulls of the forest than it is to approach the smaller bulls of the farmers' fields. Likewise, when tramping along the rural road one runs a much greater chance of being bitten by the farmer's dog, than one does, when travelling through the forest, of being bitten by a wolf. Then, too, it is just the same of men, for the men of the cities are much more quarrelsome, dishonest, and evil-minded than are those of the wilderness, and that, no doubt, accounts for the endless slandering of the wilderness dwellers by fiction writers who live in towns, for those authors—never having lived in the wilderness—form their judgment of life, either as they have experienced it in cities or as they imagine it to be in the wilderness.

#### THE OUTLAW AND NEW YORKER

Now, in order to confirm my statement, I shall go to the very extreme and quote what Al Jennings, the notorious outlaw, says upon this very subject. The quotation is taken from Jennings' reminiscences of his prison days, when he and the late lamented William Sydney Porter—the afterward famous author O. Henry—formed such a strong friendship. In the following dialogue Jennings is in New York City visiting Porter—whom he calls "Bill"—and Porter is speaking:

"I have accepted an invitation for you, Colonel." He was in one of his gently sparkling moods. "Get into your *armor asinorum*, for we fare forth to make contest with tinsel and gauze. In other words, we mingle with the proletariat. We go to see Margaret Anglin and Henry Miller in that superb and realistic Western libel, 'The Great Divide.'"

After the play the great actress, Porter, and I, and one or two others were to have supper at the Breslin Hotel. I think Porter took me there that he might sit back and enjoy my unabashed criticisms to the young lady's face.

"I feel greatly disappointed in you, Mr. Porter," Margaret Anglin said to Bill as we took our places at the table.

"In what have I failed?"

"You promised to bring your Western friend—that terrible Mr. Jennings—to criticize the play."

"Well, I have introduced him." He waved his hand down toward me.

Miss Anglin looked me over with the trace of a smile in her eye.

"Pardon me," she said, "but I can hardly associate you with the lovely things they say of you. Did you like the play?"

I told her I didn't. It was unreal. No man of the West would shake dice for a lady in distress. The situation was unheard of and could only occur in the imagination of a fat-headed Easterner who had never set his feet beyond the Hudson.

Miss Anglin laughed merrily. "New York is wild over it; New York doesn't know any better."

Porter sat back, an expansive smile spreading a light in his gray eyes.

"I am inclined to agree with our friend," he offered. "The West is unacquainted with Manhattan chivalry."

That is the truth in a sentence; and while O. Henry and Jennings have spoken for the West, may I add my own experience of wilderness men and say that the North, also, is unacquainted with Manhattan chivalry.

#### LAW AND ORDER ENFORCED

Furthermore, while upon this subject, I wish to add to my own protest against the novelists' wild dreams of outlawry in the Canadian wilderness, a quotation from E. Ward Smith's "Chronicles of the Klondyke." Mr. Smith—as you no doubt



remember—was the first city clerk, treasurer, assessor, and tax collector of Dawson City; and this is what he says:

“I want to say at the very outset that the Yukon was, in my opinion at least, one of the most orderly corners of the earth. Even in the early days of the boom, when miners and adventurers of all nationalities poured in, the scales of justice were held firmly and rigidly. The spell of the Mounted Police hung over the snow-bound land and checked the evil-doer. It may sound ridiculous when I assert that the Yukon—that gathering spot of so much of the scum of the earth—was better policed than Winnipeg, or Toronto, or Halifax; but, nevertheless, I believe it to be a fact.

“Of course, crimes were committed, some of which were never solved. Doubtless, also many deeds of violence occurred whose authors never came to light. But, on the whole, life and property were surprisingly secure. One day I visited the cabin of my friend Lippy, who made a million or so upon El Dorado. The door was partly open, so, on receiving no response to my knock, I walked in. The cabin was empty. On the table was a five-gallon pail heaped high with glittering nuggets of gold! I glanced around the place. On the shelves and rafters, on chairs and under bunks, were cans filled with gold. There was a snug fortune in sight. Any one could have slipped in and stolen the lot. I took Lippy to task about it when he came in. He did not seem at all concerned, however.

“Pshaw,” he said, “I always have quite a lot of gold about. But no one would steal it. I’ve never lost anything.”

But as the Yukon and New York are a long way from where Oo-koo-hoo was hunting, let us return to his Moose Hills.

#### THE WAYS OF THE MOOSE

Moose mate in September and October, and during this period great battles between bulls frequently occur before the

victor walks off with his hard-won spouse. The young—either one or two, but generally two after the mother's first experience—are born in May, in some secluded spot, and the calves soon begin to follow their mother about, and they follow her, too, into their second year. Horns begin to grow on the young bull before he is a year old, but they are mere knobs until he is a year and a half old, when spikes form; by the third year he is supplied with antlers. The perfect antlers of a big bull sometimes measure seventy inches across, yet every winter—in January or February—the horns are shed. During the mating season moose are frequently hunted by the method known as "calling." The hunter, with the aid of a birch-bark megaphone, imitates the long-drawn call of the cow, to attract the bull. Then, when a bull answers with his guttural grunt of *Oo-ah, Oo-ah*, the Indian imitates that sound, too, to give the first bull the impression that a second is approaching, and thus provokes the first to hurry forward within range of the hunter's gun. But when the rutting season is over, the hunting is done by snaring or stalking or trailing. The moose derives its winter food principally from browsing upon hardwood twigs, and when the deep snows of midwinter arrive, he is generally to be found in a "yard" where such growth is most abundant.

A moose yard is usually composed of a series of gutters from one foot to eighteen inches wide, intersecting one another at any distance from ten to fifty feet or more apart, and each gutter being punctured about every three feet with a post hole in which the moose steps as it walks. The space between the tracks is generally nothing but deep, soft snow, anywhere from three to five feet in depth.

Beside the moose tracks that Oo-koo-hoo and I had seen that day was much silver birch and red willow, and from the signs of freshly cropped twigs we knew that the moose were not unusually tall, and we knew, too, from the fact that the tracks were sharply defined as well as from their ordinary size and that they

were not deeply impressed in the snow, that the moose were those of about three years old.

#### THE OWL TRACKS MOOSE

That night, as Oo-koo-hoo was in a talkative mood, he told me much about the hunting of moose, as we sat before our snow-encircled fire in the still, silent, sombre woods.

"We hunters usually take moose by shooting or snaring them, and the first thing to do is to find a track, and if it is old, follow it up until new signs appear. And now, my son, as you may some day want to hunt moose on your own account, I shall tell you how to trail them and what to do when you find them. Listen to my words and remember: As soon as you find a fresh track, look toward the sun to learn the time of day; for if it is between eight and nine on a winter morning the moose will be feeding, as it seldom lies down until between ten and three. If feeding, the track will zig-zag about, and for a time head mainly up wind, until its feeding is nearly done, then if the wind is from the right, the moose will turn to the left and circle down wind and finally come about close to its old trail where it will lie down to rest. So when you find a zig-zagging track about which the brush has been browsed, and when the wind comes from the right of the trail, you, too, should circle to the left, but instead of circling down wind as the moose has done, or is now doing, you circle up wind until you either approach the danger point where the wind may carry your scent to the moose, or otherwise, until you cut the moose's track. In either case you should now retrace your steps for some distance and then begin a new circle, and this time, a smaller one. If you now find a new trail, but still no sign that the moose has turned up wind, or is about to do so, you retrace your steps and begin a still smaller circle, then when you strike the trail again, you can judge fairly well—without even getting a sight of it—the exact



position of your quarry. Then is the time to take off your snowshoes and approach with greater care than ever; but remember, always keep to leeward of the track and always look up wind. Should you now come to an open space, watch carefully any clumps of trees or bushes; if passing through heavy timber, watch for an opening, and if there should be fallen timber there, scan it most carefully where the dead trees lie, for there, too, your game may be lying. Remember, my son, if you approach a moose directly he will either see or scent you, and in circling, you must understand that only the skill of the hunter in reading the signs can successfully determine the size of the circle—sometimes it may cover a quarter of a mile.

“Then, too, my son, the seasons play a part in hunting. In winter, a moose, of course, does not go to water, but eats snow to slake its thirst. But whenever there is open water, a moose will go to drink about sunrise; in the fly season, however, all rules are broken, as the brute then goes to water night or day, to get rid of the pests, and it will even remain submerged with nothing above the surface—save its nose. In stormy weather look for moose among heavy timber, and in fair weather search the open feeding places. But in bad weather, though the hunter gains one advantage, the moose gains another; for while many twigs and sticks are apt to be broken by the high wind and thus the sound of the hunter’s approach is less likely to be heard, the eddying currents of air are then more apt to carry the hunter’s scent to the moose regardless of the fact that his approach may be faultless.

“Also, my son, you must be careful not to disturb the little tell-tale creatures of the woods or success that seems so near may vanish in a moment; for a raven may fly overhead, and spying you, circle about—just as the pigeons used to do—and then crying out may warn the moose of your presence. Or you may flush a partridge; or a squirrel, taking fright, may rush up a tree and begin chattering about you; or a rabbit

may go drumming into a thicket, and the moose, reading these signs of alarm, will surely look about to learn the cause.

“But, my son, should you spy a moose lying down, it is rather risky to fire at it in that position, as it is then hard to hit a vital spot. The better way is to stand with cocked gun covering the game, and then break a twig—not too sharply though, or you may scare away your quarry. Watch its ears: if they flop back and forward, it has heard nothing, but if both ears point in your direction, keep still and be ready, for it has heard you, and now with one great spring it may disappear into a thicket. Instead of breaking a twig, some hunters prefer to whistle like a startled rabbit while other hunters prefer to speak to the moose in a gentle voice, always taking care to use none but kindly words, such as for instance: ‘Oh, my lazy brother, I see you are sleeping long this morning.’

“For we Indians never speak harshly to so good an animal, nor do we ever use bad words, as bad words always bring bad luck to the hunter.

“In winter, my son, a moose makes much noise in walking and feeding, for then he often breaks off the tops of little trees—though some of the trunks may be as thick as a man’s arm. The moose breaks down trees of such a size by placing his big shoulder against it, and curving his powerful neck round it, and then bending it over with his massive head. Then, too, he often rides down small trees, such as birch or poplars, just by straddling his fore legs about them and using his chest to force them over.

“In shooting a moose, remember the best spot is just behind the shoulder, and while the next best is in the kidneys, the head is not a good shot for a smooth-bore gun, for bone often deflects a round ball. A good hunter always tries to get a clear view of his quarry, for even a twig may deflect his bullet. And remember, too, my son, that as a rule, when coming upon a fresh track, it is wiser to back-track it than to follow it up at once,

as back-tracking will provide the hunter with about all the information he may require, as the back trail will tell him if the game was travelling fast or slow, whether it was fleeing in fright or feeding; and if feeding, whether it was feeding quietly or in haste; and if in haste, the twigs would be torn off instead of being clean cut. Sometimes a good hunter will back-track a trail several miles in order to assure the success of his hunt.

“My son, if a moose is badly frightened by man-smell it may at first go off on the gallop and then settle down to a steady trot for four or five miles before it stops to listen—but not to feed. Then, turning its head this way and that, and even trembling with excitement, as it throws its snout into the air, to test if danger is still following, it may then start off again on another long trot, but all the time it will, as much as possible, avoid open places. Later it may attempt to feed by tearing off twigs as it hurries along, and then at last it will circle to leeward and finally rest not far from its old trail. Under such conditions, the distance a moose travels depends largely upon the depth of the snow. Two or three feet of snow will not hamper it much, but when the depth is four feet, or when the moose’s belly begins to drag in the snow, the brute will not travel far. An old bull will not run as far as a young one, and a cow will not travel as far as a bull; but when tired out a moose sleeps soundly, so soundly, indeed, that a hunter can easily approach as close as he pleases. But don’t forget, my son, that a good hunter never runs a moose—at least, not unless he is starving—as running a moose spoils the meat.


“Sometimes, my son, a hunter may use a dog to trail a moose, but it is dangerous work for the dog, as the moose may turn at bay and strike at the dog with any one of its chisel-like hoofs or may even seize the dog by the back in its mouth, carry it for a little way, then throw it into the air and when it falls trample it to death. So, my son, when hunting moose in that way, it is best to have two dogs or more, as then one dog may attack



while another is being pursued. But I warn you, if you are in pursuit of a moose and if he turns at bay for the first time . . . look out . . . for then he will surely attack you; if, however, he turns at bay through sheer exhaustion or from overwhelming pain, he will not always fight; but under the first condition, the hunter is a fool if he approaches within ten paces of a bayed moose."

"THE OWL" MAKES A KILL

Rising early next morning we made a very small fire to cook our breakfast and were ready to start as soon as dawn came to light us on our way. Oo-koo-hoo took great care in loading his gun as he expected to come upon moose at any time. He placed a patch of cotton about the ball before ramming it in, and made sure that the powder showed in the nipple before putting on the percussion cap. And as he took his fire-steel and whetted a keener edge upon his knife, a smile of hunter's contentment overspread his face, because he well knew how soon he was to use the blade. That morning he did not light his pipe as usual because, as he explained, he wanted to have his wits about him; furthermore, he did not wish to add to the strength of his man-smell; and whispering to me he added with a smile:

 "My son, when I smell some men, especially some white men, I never blame the animals of the Strong Woods for taking fright and running away."

And that reminds me that while we white people consider the negro the standard-bearer of the most offensive of all human body smells, the Indian always unhesitatingly awards the palm to the white man, and sometimes even the Indian children and babies, when they get an unadulterated whiff from a white man, will take such fright that it is hard for their mothers to console them—a fact that has often made me wonder what

the poor little tots would do if they scented one of those highly painted and perfumed "ladies" that parade up and down Piccadilly, Fifth Avenue, or Yonge Street?

After following the trail for about fifteen minutes, we came to where the moose had been lying down, and the hunter whispered:

"My son, I am glad I did not smoke, but I am sorry that we camped so near." Then he added as he pointed to the impression of a moose's body in the snow: "A moose seldom lies twice in the same place in the snow, as the old bed would be frozen and hard as well as dirty."

But as we had not made much noise, nor cut any big wood to make a fire, he was hopeful that our chances were still good; and at sunrise he concluded that it was time we should leave our sled behind and begin to track our quarry more cautiously. From then on there was to be no talking—not even in a whisper. Soon we came upon yesterday's tracks, then farther on we saw where the moose had circled before lying down again for the night, with their eyes guarding their front while their scent guarded their rear.

At last we came upon still fresher signs that told that the moose might be within a hundred paces or less. At a signal from the old hunter I imitated him by slipping off my snowshoes, and standing them upon end in the snow, and Oo-koo-hoo leading the way, began to circle to our right as a gentle wind was coming on our left. Now our progress was indeed slow, and also perfectly noiseless. It seemed to take an age to make a semicircle of a couple of hundred paces. Again we came upon the tracks of the moose. The signs were now fresher than ever. Retracing our own tracks for a little way we started on another circle, but this time, a smaller one, for we were now very near the moose. Silent ages passed, then we heard the swishing of a pulled branch as it flew back into place; a few steps nearer we progressed; then we heard the

munching sound of a large animal's jaws. Oo-koo-hoo rose slightly from his stooped position, peered through the branches of a dense spruce thicket, crouched again, turned aside for perhaps twenty paces . . . looked up again . . . raised his gun and saying in a gentle voice: "My brother, I need . . ." he fired.

Instantly there was a great commotion beyond the thicket, one sound running off among the trees, while the other, the greater sound, first made a brittle crash, then a ponderous thud as of a large object falling among the dead under-branches.

The hunter now straightened up and with his teeth pulled the plug from his powder horn, poured a charge into his gun, spat a bullet from his mouth into the barrel, struck the butt violently upon the palm of his left hand, then slipping a cap upon the nipple, moved cautiously forward as he whispered: "Its neck must be broken." Soon we saw what had happened. One moose was lying dead, the ball had struck it in the neck; it was a three-year-old cow—the one Oo-koo-hoo had selected—while the other, a bull, had left nothing but its tracks.

Presently The Owl re-loaded his gun with greater care, then we returned for our snowshoes and to recover our toboggan before we started to skin the carcass. On the way Oo-koo-hoo talked of moose hunting, and I questioned him as to why he had turned aside for the last time, just before he fired, and he answered:

"My son, I did it so that in case I should miss, the report of my gun would come from the right direction to drive the moose toward home and also toward our sled; and in case, too, that I hit the moose and only wounded it, the brute would run toward our sled and not take us farther away from it. Also, my son, if I had merely wounded the beast, but had seen from the way it flinched that it had been struck in a vital spot, I would not have followed immediately, but would have sat





"It was on my father's hunting grounds, and late one afternoon, after passing through heavy timber, I came out upon its shore, and there I discovered two half-breeds robbing one of my traps. One man was holding up the otter by the tail and laughingly commenting on his gain, while the other was resetting the trap beneath the ice. I raised my gun and was about to fire, when . . ."

See Chapter VI



down and had a smoke, so as not to further disturb the wounded animal before it had time to bleed to death. Besides, a mere glance at the trail would tell me whether or not I had mortally wounded the moose—whether the brute was hit high or low, and whether the blood was dark or light. If hit high, the blood would be upon the branches as well as upon the snow; if the blood was black it would mean that an artery had been severed and that the moose was mortally wounded. If the latter had happened, then would be the time for me to get out my pipe and have a smoke.”

#### SKINNING ANIMALS

As we were to be busy for the rest of the day, we made a suitable camp and started a fire and by that time the moose had stiffened enough for proper handling while removing the skin. As usual the hunter's first act was to cut the eyes, then to cut off the head, which he at once skinned and, removing the tongue, hung the head beside the fire to cook while we went on with our work.

But while we propped up the moose and got it into good position, three whiskey jacks (Canada Jays) came, as they always seem to come at the first sign of smoke, to pay us a visit and partake of the feast. They are fluffy, heavily feathered little birds of gray, with wings and tail of darker hue, and with a white spot on their forehead. They are not unlike the blue jay in their calls and shrieks, though they have some notes of their own that are of a quieter, softer tone. They are friendly little beggars that will at times come so near that they may occasionally be caught in one's hand; but while one likes to have them about for the sake of their companionship, they will, uninvited, take a share of anything that is good to eat. They are the most familiar birds to be seen in the winter forest, and they have a remarkable way of laying their



eggs and nesting in the month of March when the weather may register from twenty to forty below zero.

In the forest there are several different ways of skinning animals: one is called "case skinning" and another is called "split skinning." To case skin an animal such as ermine, fox, fisher, lynx, marten, mink, otter, muskrat, rabbit, or skunk, the skin is cut down the inner side of each hind leg until the two cuts meet just under the tail, and then the pelt is peeled off by turning it inside out. To split skin an animal such as wood-buffalo, moose, wapiti, caribou, deer, bear, beaver, wolf, or wolverine, the skin is cut down the belly from throat to tail and also on the inside of each leg to the centre cut, and then the pelt is peeled off both ways toward the back. All split skins are stretched on rectangular frames—all save beaver skins which are stretched on oval frames. All case skins are stretched over wedge-shaped boards of various sizes—all save muskrat skins which are more often stretched over a hooped frame or a looped stick. So, of course, our moose pelt was "split skinned," but there is still another way to skin an animal that is too large for one man to turn over, and that is—in case the animal is lying on its belly—to split the skin down the back and then peel it off both ways toward the belly.

If the skin is to be used as a robe, the hair is left on, and the animal's brains are rubbed into the inner side of the pelt, after the fat has been removed, and then the skin is left to dry. That softens the pelt; but traders prefer skins to be sun-dried or cold-dried. If the skin is to be used as leather, the hair is cut off with a knife, and a deer's shin-bone is used as a dressing tool in scraping off the fat; both sides of the skin are dressed to remove the outer surface. It is easier to dress a skin in winter than in summer, but summer-made leather wears better, for the reason that the roots of the hair run all through a summer skin; whereas in winter the roots show only

on the outer side; that is why a fur-trader—when looking only at the inner side—can tell whether a skin has been taken in winter or summer. In dressing leather the inner side is rubbed well with brains which are then allowed to soak in for three or four days; then the skin is soaked in a vessel filled with water—but not in a river—for about two days more; then it is stretched again and let dry, then scraped with a bone, shell, or steel scraper—if it is a moose skin, only on one side, but if it is a caribou skin, on both sides. The object of scraping is to further soften the skin. After that, it is taken off the stretcher and rubbed together between the hands and pulled between two people. Then it is stretched again and smoked over a slow fire that does not blaze.

Woodsmen hunt moose for food and clothing. Townsmen hunt moose for the satisfaction of killing. But should the townsman fail in his hunt, he may hire a native “Head Hunter” to secure a head for him; and that reminds me of one night during the early winter, when a strange apparition was seen crossing the lake. It appeared to have wings, but it did not fly, and though it possessed a tail, it did not run, but contented itself with moving steadily forward on its long, up-turned feet. Over an arm it carried what might have been a trident, and what with its waving tail and great outspreading wings that rose above its horned-like head, it suggested that nothing less than Old Beelzebub himself had come from his flaming region beyond to cool himself on the snow-covered lake. But in reality it was just Oo-koo-hoo returning with a fine pair of moose horns upon his back, and which he counted on turning over to the trader for some city sportsman who would readily palm it off as a trophy that had fallen to his unerring aim, and which he had brought down, too, with but a single shot . . . of \$25.

While at work I recalled how Oo-koo-hoo had surmised, before he had examined the carcass, that he had broken the

moose's neck with his ball, and on questioning him as to how he knew, he replied:

"My son, if an animal is hit in the neck and the neck is broken, the beast will collapse right where it is; but if hit in the heart, it will lunge forward; if hit in the nose, it will rear up; if hit in the spine, it will leap into the air. Yes, my son, I have seen a great bull buffalo leap lynx-like, into the air, when it was struck in the spine."

Knowing that the hunter had wanted to procure more than one moose I asked him why he had not at once pursued the other? And he explained:

"For two reasons, my son: first, because I don't want a bull, I want the tenderer meat and the softer skin of a cow; and secondly, even if I had wanted him, I would not have pursued him at once as that would cause him to run. If a moose is pursued on the run, it overheats, and that spoils the meat, because the moose is naturally a rather inactive animal that lives on a small range and travels very little; but it is quite different with the caribou, for the caribou is naturally an active animal, a great traveller, that wanders far for its food, and to pursue it on the run only improves the flavour and the texture of its meat."

#### OLD-TIME HUNTING

After supper, as we sat in the comfortable glow of the fire, we talked much of old-time hunting, for in certain parts of the Great Northern Forest many of the ancient methods are practised to-day. Fire is often made by friction; many hunters still use the bow and arrow, while others use the flintlock gun; frequently, too, they rely upon their spears; bone knives and awls as well as stone axes are still applied to work; fish nets are yet woven from the inner bark of cedar; and still to-day wooden baskets and birch-bark rogans are used for the purpose of heating water and boiling food. Notwithstanding our far over-



rated civilization the natives in some sections are dressed to-day in clothing entirely derived from the forest.

One of the most ancient methods of hunting and one which is still in vogue in some remote localities is the "drive." Two famous places for drive hunting in olden days were Point Carcajou on Peace River, and the Grand Detour on Great Slave River. The former driving ground was about thirty miles long by about three miles across, while the latter was about fifteen miles long by about three miles across. The mode of hunting was for a party of Indians to spread out through the woods, and all, at an appointed time, to move forward toward a certain point, and thus drive the game before them, until the animals, on coming out into the open at the other end, were attacked by men in ambush. At those driving grounds in the right season—even if a drive of only a few miles were made—the Indians could count on securing two or three bears, three or four moose, and twelve or fifteen caribou. But in later years, a number of the drivers having been accidentally shot from ambush, the practice has been discontinued in those localities.

#### THE BEAR IN HIS WASH

It is not an uncommon occurrence for a hunter, when traveling through the winter woods, to discover the place where a bear is hibernating; the secret being given away by the condensed breath of the brute forming hoar frost about the imperfectly blocked entrance to the wash. The Indians' hunting dogs are experts at finding such hidden treasure, and when they do locate such a claim, they do their best to acquaint their master of the fact.

One day when Oo-koo-hoo was snowshoeing across a beaver meadow, his dogs, having gained the wooded slope beyond, began racing about as though they had scented game and were trying to connect a broken trail. So The Owl got out his

pipe and sat down to have a smoke while his dogs were busily engaged. Presently they centred on a certain spot, and Oo-koo-hoo, going over, discovered the tell-tale hoar frost. Twisting out of his snowshoes—for an Indian never has to touch his hands to them when he puts them on or takes them off—he used one of them for a shovel, and digging away the snow, he came upon a bear's wash. It was quite a cave and dark inside, and as the dogs refused to enter, the hunter crawled into the entrance and reaching in as far as he could with his hand, felt the forms of two bears. Making sure of the exact position of the head of one of them, he then shoved his gun in until the muzzle was close to the ear of one of the bears and then he fired. The explosion aroused the other bear and as it crawled out Oo-koo-hoo killed it with his axe. The latter was a brown bear while the former was a black.

When a bear in his den shows fight and threatens danger, the hunter may wedge two crossed poles against the opening of the wash, leaving only enough space for the brute to squeeze through and thus prevent it from making a sudden rush. Then when the bear does try to come out, the hunter, standing over the opening, kills it with the back of his axe. Sometimes a second hole is dug in order to prod the beast with a pole to make it leave its den. The white hunter frequently uses fire to smoke a bear out, but not infrequently he succeeds in ruining the coat by singeing the hair. It requires more skill, however, to find a bear's wash than it does to kill him in his den. The Indians hunt for bear washes in the vicinity of good fishing grounds or in a district where berries have been plentiful.

One winter when I happened to be spending a few days at Brunswick House an old Indian woman came to call upon the Hudson's Bay trader's wife, and, while she was having afternoon tea, she casually remarked that while on her way to the Post she had espied a bear wash. Digging down into its den with one of her snowshoes, she had killed the brute with

her axe, and if the other guests would care to see her prize, it was lying on her sled, just outside the door. What a contrast to the way the Wild West movie actors would have done the deadly work with the aid of all their absurd artillery! Nevertheless, that kindly spoken, smiling-faced, motherly old lady, did the deed with nothing but her little axe.

But while the men of the wilderness laugh over the serious drivel of most fiction writers who make a specialty of northern tales, nothing is so supremely ludicrous as the attempts made by the average movie director to depict northern life in Canada. Never have I seen a photoplay that truthfully illustrated northern Canadian life.

#### THE WOLVERINE AND GILL NET

Next day we again set out on a moose trail, but, as ill luck followed us in the way of a heavy snowstorm, we gave up the chase and continued on our way. It was hard going and we stopped often. Once we halted to rest beside a number of otter tracks. Otters leave a surprisingly big trail for animals of their size. A good imitation could be made of an otter's trail by pressing down into the snow, in a horizontal position, a long, irregular stove pipe of the usual size. The reason the otter's trail is so formed, is that the animal, when travelling through deep snow, progresses on its belly and propels itself principally by its hind legs, especially when going down hill. When making a hillside descent an otter prefers to use an old, well-worn track and glides down it with the ease and grace of a toboggan on its slide. It was the sight of the otter's trail that set Oo-koo-hoo thinking of his younger days.

"Years ago, my son, I very nearly killed a man. It happened at just such a place as this: a little lake with a patch of open water above a spring. It was on my father's hunting grounds, and late one afternoon, after passing through heavy



timber, I came out upon its shore, and there I discovered two men robbing one of my otter traps. One man was holding up the otter by the tail and laughingly commenting on his gain, while the other was resetting the trap beneath the ice. I raised my gun and was about to fire, when it occurred to me that, after all, a man's life was worth more than an otter's skin; so I let them go, and left it to the Redcoats (Mounted Police) to settle with them. I knew them both. They were half-breeds from near Montreal, and were well learned in the ways of the whites."

But before setting out on our way—I forgot to tell you—we cached our moose meat in a tree as was previously agreed upon with old Granny, who, with the boys, was to come and take it home; and in order to prevent wolverines from stealing or spoiling the meat, the hunter wrapped round the trunk of the tree an old bag to which were fastened many fish hooks, all with their barbs pointing downward and ready to impale any creature that tried to climb the tree. Needless to say, as that tree stood alone, no wolverine touched that meat.

That day we covered about twenty miles, and by the afternoon of the second day we had arrived at the lake on the far shore of which lived Oo-koo-hoo's sister, Ko-ko-hay—The Perfect Woman—with her daughter and her son-in-law and four granddaughters. As we drew near the camp we found the women about a mile from shore fishing through the ice for salmon trout. There were a number of holes—each of which was marked by a spruce bough set upright in the snow—and the fishing was being done with hook and line. The hook dangling below the ice about a third of the water's depth, was held in position by a branch line to which was attached a suitable sinker. The trout they had caught ran from ten to thirty pounds each—as near as I could judge—and as the women had already gained a good haul, they loaded their catch upon their sled and returned home with us.

Gill nets are also used in the winter time. They are strung under the ice beneath a series of holes by means of which the net is passed under the ice with the aid of a pole. The lines being then secured at either end, the net can be readily drawn back and forth for the purpose of emptying and resetting. Of course, floats and sinkers are used to spread the net and keep it in proper position. In some localities—where the water is muddy—the nets are occasionally boiled with willow bark to keep them from being destroyed by worms.

Gill nets, however, are frequently injured by animals, not only amphibious ones such as beaver and otter, but even by such animals as wolverines. Some years ago, a Yellowknife Indian hunting near Fort Resolution had an experience of that kind. He having set a gill net beneath the ice, failed to visit it for several days. When, however, he did arrive, he saw that it had been tampered with, and found no difficulty in reading the story in the snow. A wolverine, happening by on a mild day when the fishing holes were open, began sniffing about one of the poles to which the end lines of the net were secured; then scenting the smell of fish, he began chewing the pole; and incidentally his sharp teeth severed the cords that held the net. Then, for the want of something better to do, he went to the other end, to which were attached the lines of the other end of the net. Again scenting fish, he began to chew the second pole, but this time finding it give way, he hauled it out of the hole; and with the pole came part of the net; and with the net came a few fish. In trying to free the fish from the tangled mesh, he hauled out more net which contained more fish; then, in an effort to feast royally, he ended by hauling out the whole net. The following day the Indian arrived and reading the story in the snow, set a trap for the robber. Again the wolverine came, but so did the hunter, and much to his delight found the wolverine caught in the trap.

Such an incident, indeed, is not rare, for the same thing has happened in other parts of the forest.

“THE PERFECT WOMAN”

The Perfect Woman's daughter was married to a half-breed by the name of Tastowich and the four granddaughters were nice-looking girls ranging in age from fourteen to twenty. Though very shy, they were bubbling over with quiet fun and I enjoyed my visit. That evening, among other subjects, we discussed the various hunting caps worn by Indian big-game hunters, and The Perfect Woman offered to make me one if I could supply her with the needed material; but when she saw that I had nothing but a double “four-point” Hudson's Bay blanket, she offered to make me a complete suit from that article and to lend me, for the rest of the winter, a rabbit-skin quilt to take the place of the blanket. I accepted her kindly offer, but of course paid her for both the work and the quilt.

So the older women set to work with nothing more modern in the way of tools than a pair of scissors, a thimble, and a needle and thread; and by bed time I was well rigged in Indian fashion, for the hunting trail. The cap they made me was the same as Amik wears in my picture of the lynx hunter. The suit consisted of a coat and hip-high leggings, and though I have worn that suit on many a winter trip, and though it is now over twenty-five years old, I have never had to repair their excellent hand-sewing.

When the work was finished the father and the mother crawled into a double bunk that was surrounded by a curtain; Ko-ko-hay wound herself up in a blanket and lay down upon the floor, and Oo-koo-hoo did likewise, yet there were two bunks still unoccupied. But I was informed that I was to occupy the single one, while the four girls were to sleep in the big double one. As I had not had my clothes off for several days and as



I was counting on the pleasure of sleeping in my night-shirt, I planned to sit up late enough to make my wish come true, though I knew that the intended occupants of those two bunks would have to rely solely upon darkness to form a screen, as neither bunk was provided with a curtain. After a little while, however, it began to dawn upon me that the girls were counting on doing the same thing, for they made no move to leave the open fire. But the Sand Man finally made them capitulate. At last, rising from their seats, they piled a lot of fresh wood upon the fire, then climbing into their big bunk, they took off their shawls and hanging them from the rafters, draped them completely about their bed. Now my opportunity had arrived, and though the fire was filling the one-room log house with a blaze of light, I made haste to discard my clothes—for now the older people were all sound asleep. In a few moments I was in the very act of slipping on the coveted garment when I heard a peal of merriment behind me. On looking round I discovered that the shawls had vanished from around the bunk and four merry young ladies, all in a row, were peering at me from beneath their blankets and fairly shaking their bed with laughter.

#### INDIANS AND CIVILIZATION

Tastowich's home was built entirely of wood, deerskin, and clay. The house was of logs, the glassless windows were of deerskin parchment, the door-lock and the door-hinges were of wood, the latch string was of deerskin, the fireplace and the chimney were of clay, the roof thatch was of bark. The abode was clean, serviceable, and warm; and yet it was a house that could have been built thousands of years ago. But consider, for instance, Oo-koo-hoo's comfortable lodge; a similar dwelling, no doubt, could have been erected a million years ago; and thus, even in our time, the pre-historic still hovers on the outskirts of our flimsy civilization. A civilization that

billions of human beings for millions of years have been struggling violently to gain; and now after all that eternal striving since the beginning of time—what has been the great outstanding gain—as the Indian sees it? “Baldness and starched underwear for men, high-heeled shoes and corsets for women, and for both—spectacles and false teeth.” Is it any wonder the red man laughs?

But some of you will doubt that the Indian laughs, and more of you will even doubt whether the red man possesses a sense of humour. A few days ago my Toronto oculist—you see I have been justly rewarded for hovering around civilization—and I were discussing Indians. The doctor quoted his experience with them. Some years before he had taken a trip into the forest where he had met an old Indian chief whose wife had had her eye injured by accident. The doctor told the old man if ever he contemplated taking his wife to Toronto, to let the doctor know of their coming, and he would see what he could do to repair the injury. A year or so later a letter arrived from the very same Indian reservation. Though it was hard to read, the doctor made out that the Indian intended to bring his wife to Toronto so that the oculist could fulfil his promise; but as luck would have it, the doctor had not only forgotten the Indian's name, but he had great difficulty in reading the signature. After much study, however, he decided that the old Indian had signed his name as “Chief Squirrel” so thus the doctor addressed his reply. A couple of weeks later the postman arrived with a letter he was rather loath to leave at the doctor's house. The oculist, however, on seeing that it was addressed to his own number on Bloor Street West, and that the name was preceded by the title of Doctor, believed that it was intended for him. On opening it he found it was from the old Indian whom he had addressed as “Chief Squirrel.” Now, however, he realized he had made a mistake in giving the red man such a name, for another glance at the outside of the

envelope not only proved that the Indian was indignant, but that he also possessed a sense of humour, for "Chief Squirrel" had, in return, addressed the noted oculist as "Doctor Chipmunk."

While spending a couple of days at Tastowich's house the subject of hunting was never long omitted from the general conversation; and upon learning from the half-breed that caribou were plentiful about a day's travel to the westward, nothing would do but Oo-koo-hoo must take that route on his return home; though of course it meant many more miles to cover. The excursion, however, was inviting, as a good trail could be followed all the way to the caribou country, as the Tastowichs had been hauling deer meat from that region.

By the evening of the first day, as good fortune would have it, we halted among many signs of caribou, and not only were fresh caribou tracks to be seen, but also those of wolves, for the latter were trailing the deer. The incident reminded Oo-koo-hoo of a former experience which he told as we sat by the fire.

#### WOLVES RUNNING CARIBOU

"It happened years ago. For weeks, my son, I had had ill luck and my family were starving. For days I had hunted first one kind of game and then another, but always without success. Then, as a last resort, I started after caribou, though I well knew that I should have to travel a long distance before falling in with them. But in the end I was rewarded. The going was bad, mostly through a dense growth of small black spruce, where the trees stood so close together that I had difficulty in hauling my sled, being compelled, at times, to turn on edge, not only my toboggan, but also my snowshoes, in order to pass between. After several hours' hard work the forest grew more open and, about noon of the third day, I



discovered a band of caribou quietly sunning themselves on a large muskeg.

"Some were feeding, others were lying down, fawns were scampering about in play, and young bulls were thrusting at each other with their prong-like horns. There were over a hundred in all. I watched them for some time before I was discovered by seven young bulls, and as they were nearest me, they stopped in their play, left the others, and came down wind to investigate the strange two-legged creature that also wore a caribou skin.

"With heads held high and expanded nostrils quivering in readiness to catch scent of danger, they came on very slowly yet not without a great deal of high stepping and of prancing, with a sort of rhythmical dancing motion. Every now and then they threw their heads down, then up, and then held them rigid again. They were brave enough to come within sixty or seventy paces and even a little closer. But as ill luck ordained, while I was waiting for a better chance to bring down one of them with my old flint-lock, they caught scent of me, and suddenly falling back—almost upon their haunches—as though they had been struck upon the head, they wheeled round, then fled in alarm to the main body. Then, as caribou usually do, the whole band began leaping three or four feet into the air—much as they sometimes do when hit by a bullet. Then, too, with tails up they swept away at full gallop and, entering the forest beyond, were lost to view.

"It was a great disappointment, my son, and I became so disheartened that I made but a poor attempt to trail them that day. That evening, when I lay down to rest upon the edge of a muskeg, the moon was already shining; and by midnight the cold was so intense that the frost-bitten trees went off with such bangs that I was startled out of my slumber. It was then that I discovered a pack of eight wolves silently romping about in the snow of the muskeg—just like a lot of young dogs.

Their antics interested me and it was some time before I fell asleep again.

"In the morning, though a heavy rime (frozen mist) was falling and though it was so thick that it obliterated the surrounding forest, I set out again in search of game tracks, and having crossed the muskeg, not only found the tracks of many caribou, but learned, too, that the eight wolves were now trailing the deer in earnest.

"About half way between sunrise and midday I came upon a lake, and there I discovered not only the same herd of caribou and the same wolves, but the deer were running at full speed with the wolves in full chase behind them. My son, it was a fascinating sight. The caribou were going at full gallop, covering twenty feet or more at a bound, and all running at exactly the same speed, none trying to outstrip the others, for the fawns, does, and bucks were all compactly bunched together. It was as exciting and as interesting a sight as one may see in the Strong Woods. Though the wolves did not seem to be putting forth their utmost speed, they nevertheless took care to cut every corner, and thus they managed to keep close behind, while their long, regular lope foretold their eventually overhauling their quarry.

"Protected by a gentle southwest wind and a thick screen of underbrush, I watched the chase. Three times the deer circled the lake, which was about half a mile in length. For safety's sake the caribou carefully avoided entering the woods, even rounding every point rather than cut across among the trees. On the fourth round I saw that the wolves had set their minds upon running down a single deer, for as they now suddenly burst forward at their top speed, the herd, splitting apart, allowed the wolves to pass through their ranks. A few moments later an unfortunate doe, emerging in front, galloped frantically ahead with the wolves in hot pursuit; while the rest of the herd slowed down to a trot, then to a walk, and finally

halted to rest in perfect indifference as to their companion's fate.

"Round and round the lake the frightened creature sped, with the determined wolves behind her. Presently, however, the wolves one by one turned aside, and lay down to rest, until only two continued the pursuit. But as the deer came round the lake again several of the now-refreshed wolves again entered the chase, thus they relieved one another. The ill-fated doe, in a vain hope of throwing aside her pursuers, twice rushed into the very centre of the caribou herd; but it was of no avail, for, as the wolves relentlessly followed her, the other deer wildly scattered away to a safer distance, where, however, they soon came together again, and stood watching their enemies running down their doomed comrade. Now first one wolf and then another took the lead; closer and closer they pressed upon the exhausted doe whose shortening stride told that her strength was fast ebbing away.

"My son, perhaps you wonder why I did not use my gun? I was out of range, and, moreover, while I was afraid that if I ventured out of the woods I might frighten the game away, I knew I had but to wait a little while and then I should be sure of at least one deer without even firing my gun. I did not have to wait long. With a few tremendous leaps the leading wolf seized the doe by the base of the throat and throwing her, heels over head, brought her down.

"Realizing that I must act at once, I rushed out upon the lake, but in my haste I fell and broke the stock off my gun—just behind the hammer. But as I still had my axe, I picked up the broken gun, and charged in among the wolves that now began to back away, though not without much snarling, glaring of angry eyes, and champing of powerful jaws. As one remained too near, I let drive at it with a charge from my almost useless gun; and though I missed my aim, the report relieved me of any further trouble. Cutting up the deer, I



feasted upon it for several hours, then loaded my sled and hurried home with the meat for my starving family."

There are three principal species of Canadian caribou: the smallest living on the Barren Grounds and taking their name from that region; the largest frequenting the Rocky Mountains west of the Mackenzie River and known as Woodland or Mountain caribou; and the intermediate size inhabiting the Great Northern Forest and called Woodland caribou.

In comparison with moose, wapiti, and other deer of North America, the Woodland caribou ranks third in size. In colour its coat is of a grayish brown with a white neck and belly. In winter the heavy growth of neck hair really amounts to a mane. Of the three breeds, the Woodland caribou have the smallest horns, the Barren Ground the slenderest, while the Mountain caribou have the most massive. Record antlers range from fifty- to sixty-inch beams, with a forty- to fifty-inch spread, and possessing from sixty to seventy points. The does are usually provided with small horns, and in that way they are distinct from all other Canadian deer.

On account of its wide-spreading and concave hoofs the Woodland caribou does not have to "yard" as other deer do in winter time, for thus provided with natural snowshoes, the caribou can pass over the deepest snow with little trouble. Also, throughout the year it is an extensive traveller, and as its food is found everywhere within its wide range, its wanderings are determined chiefly by the wind. Indeed, so great a traveller is it that, when thoroughly alarmed, it may cover from fifty to a hundred miles before settling down again. Rivers and lakes do not hinder its roaming for it is a powerful and a willing swimmer. The mating takes place in October and the calves are born in June.

The following morning while at breakfast Oo-koo-hoo discoursed upon the game we were about to hunt:

"My son, everything that applies to hunting the moose,

applies to hunting the caribou, except that the hunter never tries to 'call' the caribou. But now I recollect that there is one thing about moose hunting that I forgot to tell you and it applies also to hunting the caribou. In some localities barriers are still in use, but nowadays they seldom make new ones. In the old days whole tribes used to take part in barrier hunting and sometimes the barriers would stretch for fifteen or twenty miles and were usually made from one part of the river to another, and thus they marked off the woods enclosed in a river's bend. Barriers are made by felling trees in a line; or, in an open place, or upon a river or lake, placing a line of little trees in the snow about ten paces apart. Small evergreens with the butts no thicker than a man's thumb were often used; yet an artificial line of such brush was enough to turn moose or caribou and cause them to move forward in a certain direction where the hunters were hiding. Even big clumps of moss, placed upon trees, will produce the same effect. Frequently, too, snares for deer are set in suitable places along the barrier, and while the snares are made of *babiche* the loops are kept open with blades of grass.

"There is still another thing I forgot to tell you about moose hunting—my son, I must be growing old when I forget so much. While my Indian cousins in the East use birch-bark horns for calling moose, my other cousins in the Far North never do, yet they call moose, too, but in a different way. They use the shoulder blade of a deer. Thus, when a bull is approaching, the hunter stands behind a tree and rubs the shoulder blade upon the trunk or strikes it against the branches of a neighbouring bush, as it then makes a sound not unlike a bull thrashing his horns about. Such a sound makes a bull believe that another is approaching and ready to fight him for the possession of the cow, and he prepares to charge his enemy. At such a moment the hunter throws the shoulder blade into some bushes that may be standing a little way off, and the

enraged bull, hearing this last sound, charges directly for the spot. Then, as the brute passes broadside, the hunter fires.

"But, my son, to return to caribou hunting, you probably know that those deer are very fond of open places during sunny weather in winter time, such places as, for instance, rivers and small lakes where the wind will not be strong. There they will spend most of the day resting or playing together in big bands of perhaps fifty or more. Sometimes, however, when a high wind springs up, they have a curious custom of all racing round in a circle at high speed. It is a charming sight to watch them at such sport. Most of their feeding is done right after sunrise and just before sunset, and at night they always resort to the woods.

"Then, too, when caribou go out upon a lake they have a habit of lying down beside the big ridges that rise three or four feet above the rest of the surface, where the ice has been split apart and then jammed together again with such power that the edges are forced upward. They lie down there to avoid the wind while resting in the sun. There the hunter sometimes digs a trench in the snow and lies in wait for the unsuspecting deer. When he shoots one, he immediately skins it, but takes care to leave the head attached to the skin; then ramming a pole into the head at the neck, he drapes the skin over the pole and getting down on all fours places the skin over his back and pretends to be a caribou. Thus he will approach the band, and should he tire of crawling along on his hands and knees he will even lie down to rest in sight of the deer, but he always takes care to keep down wind. In such a guise it is not hard to come within gun-range of the band.

"A very good thing to carry when hunting deer in the woods is a bunch of tips of deer horns, each about four inches long and all suspended from the back of the hunter's belt; as the horn tips will then tinkle together at every movement of the hunter, and make a sound as though the horns of a distant



band of closely marching caribou were striking together. In that way, my son, it is easier to approach, and when you are ready to fire, look carefully for a large, white, fat doe, and then let drive at her; for bands of deer are never led by bulls, but always by does and usually by a barren one. If you shoot the leader first, the chances are the band will stand waiting for one of their number to lead the way. Remember, too, that deer are never so frightened at seeing or hearing you as they are at scenting you, for the merest whiff of man-smell will drive them away. When they first scent you they will take two or three jumps into the air with their heads held high, their nostrils extended, and their eyes peering about; then swinging round, they will gallop off and later settle down into a great high-stepping, distance-covering trot that will carry them many miles away before they halt. There is still another good way to hunt caribou on a lake and that is to put on a wolf skin and approach on all fours, but it is not so successful as when the hunter wears a caribou skin."

#### TRAILING IN THE SNOW

Breakfast over, we slipped on our snowshoes and set out to follow a mass of tracks that led southward. It was easy going on a beaten trail, a blind man could have followed it; and that reminds me of something I have failed to tell you about winter trailing in the Northland. In winter, the men of the Northland don't trail human beings by scent, they trail them by sight or sometimes by touch. Sight trailing, of course, you understand. Trailing by touch, however, when not understood by the spectator, seems a marvellous performance. For instance, when a husky dog, the leader of a sled-train, will come out of the forest and with his head held high, and without a moment's hesitation, trot across a lake that may be three or four miles wide, upon the surface of which the wind and drifting snow

have left absolutely no visible sign of a trail, and when that dog will cross that great unbroken expanse and enter the woods on the far shore exactly where the trail appears in sight again, though no stick or stone or any other visible thing marks the spot—it does seem a marvellous feat. But it is done, not by sight, sound, or scent, but by touch—the feel of the foot. In winter time man, too, follows a trail in the same way, notwithstanding that he is generally handicapped by a pair of snowshoes. Some unseen trails are not hard to follow—even a blind man could follow them. It is done this way:

Suppose you come to a creek that you want to cross, yet you can see no way of doing it, for there is nothing in sight—neither log nor bridge—spanning the river. But suppose someone tells you that, though the water is so muddy that you cannot see an inch into it, there is a flat log spanning the creek about six inches below the surface, and that if you feel about with your foot you can find it. Then, of course, you would make your way across by walking on the unseen log, yet knowing all the time that if you made a misstep you would plunge into the stream. You would do it by the feel of the foot. It is just the same in following an unseen trail in the snow—it lies hard-packed beneath the surface, just as the log lay unseen in the river. What a pity it is that the writers of northern tales so rarely understand the life they have made a specialty of depicting.

But to return to the caribou we were trailing, and also to make a long hunt short—for you now know most of the interesting points in the sport—I must tell you that we spent a full day and a night before we came up with them. And that night, too, a heavy fall of snow added to our trouble, but it made the forest more beautiful than ever. It was after sunrise when we picked up fresh tracks. A heavy rime was falling, but though it screened all distant things, we espied five caribou that were still lingering on a lake, over which the main band had passed.

They were east of us and were heading for the north side of a long, narrow island. As soon as they passed behind it, Oo-koo-hoo hurried across the intervening space, and ran along the southern shore to head them off. The eastern end of the island dwindled into a long point and it was there that The Owl hoped to get a shot. Sure enough he did, for he arrived there ahead of the deer. Though he had lost sight of them, he knew they were nearing him, for he could hear the crunching sound of their hoofs in the frosty snow, and later he could even hear that strange clicking sound caused by the muscular action of the hoofs in walking—a sound peculiar to caribou.

Oo-koo-hoo cautiously went down on one knee and there waited with his gun cocked and in position. The air was scarcely moving. Now antlered heads appeared beyond the openings between the snow-mantled trees. The hunter, taking aim, addressed them:

“My brothers, I need your . . .” Then the violent report of his gun shattered the stillness, and the leader, a doe, lunged forward a few paces, staggered upon trembling legs, and then sank down into the brilliantly sunny snow. But before Oo-koo-hoo could re-load for a second shot the rest of the little band passed out of range, and, with their high-stepping, hackney action, soon passed out of sight. So, later on, with our sled again heavily loaded, and with packs of meat upon our backs, we set out for home.

#### THE MAN WHO HIBERNATED

Next morning, soon after sunrise, while I was breaking trail across a lake, I espied a log house in a little clearing beside a large beaver meadow. As it was about the time we usually stopped for our second breakfast, I turned in the direction of the lonely abode. It was a small, well-built house, and with the exception of the spaces at the two windows and the door, was



entirely enclosed by neatly stacked firewood suitable for a stove. Beyond, half built in the rising ground, stood a little log stable, and near it a few cattle were eating from haystacks. Going up to the shack, I knocked upon the door, and as a voice bade me enter I slipped off my snowshoes, pulled the latch string, and walked in. Entering from the dazzling sunlight made the room at first seem in darkness. Presently, however, I regained my sight, and then beheld the interior of a comfortable little home—the extreme of neatness and order; and then I saw a human form lying beneath the blankets of a bunk in a far corner. Later I noticed that two black eyes beneath a shock of black hair were smiling a welcome.

“Good morning,” I greeted. “May I use your stove to cook breakfast?”

“No, sir,” replied the figure, then it sat up in bed, and I saw that it was a white man. “I’ll do the cooking myself, for you’re to be my guest.”

“Thanks,” I returned, “I’m travelling with an Indian and I don’t wish to trouble you; but if I may use your stove I’ll be much obliged.”

“If I have what you haven’t got,” my host smiled, “will you dine with me?”

“All right,” I agreed.

“Potatoes,” he exclaimed.

“Good,” I laughed.

“Then sit down, please, and rest while I do the cooking.”

Oo-koo-hoo now came in and at the host’s bidding, filled his pipe from a tobacco pouch upon the table.

The accent of the stranger suggested that he was an English gentleman, and it seemed strange, indeed, to discover so refined and educated a man living apparently alone and without any special occupation in the very heart of the Great Northern Forest. Curiosity seized me. Then I wondered—was this the man? . . . could he be “Son-in-law”?

But I refrained from questioning him. So I talked about the woods and the weather, while Oo-koo-hoo brought in a haunch of venison from his sled and presented it to the stranger. But with my host's every action and word the mystery grew.

The stove, which was fireless, stood beside the bed, and reaching for the griddle-lifter, my host removed the lids; then picking up a stick of pine kindling from behind the stove, he whittled some shavings and placed them in the fire-box; and on top of this he laid kindling and birch firewood. Then he replaced the lids, struck a match, and while the fire began to roar, filled the kettle from a keg of water that stood behind the stove, and mind you, he did it without getting out of bed. Next, he leant over the side of the bunk, opened a little trap door in the floor, reached down into his little box-like cellar, and hauled up a bag containing potatoes, which he then put in a pot to boil, in their skins. From the wall he took a long stick with a crook upon the end, and reaching out, hooked the crook round the leg and drew the table toward him. Reaching up to one of the three shelves above his bunk, he took down the necessary dishes and cutlery to set the breakfast table for us three. While the potatoes were boiling he took from another shelf—the one upon which he kept a few well-chosen books—a photograph album and suggested that I look it over while he broiled the venison steak and infused the tea.

When I opened the album and saw its contents, it not only further excited my curiosity regarding the personal history of my host, but it thrilled me with interest, for never before or since have I seen an album that contained photographs of a finer-looking or more distinguished lot of people. Its pages contained photographs of Lord This, General That, Admiral What's-his-name, and also the Bishop of I've-forgotten and many a Sir and Lady, too, as well as the beautiful Countess of Can't-remember.

Breakfast was served. The potatoes were a treat, the steak

was excellent, the tea was good, and there we three sat and ate a hearty meal, for not only did we relish the food, but the company, the wit, and the laughter, too. But all the while my healthy, jovial, handsome host remained in bed. I studied the blankets that covered his legs—apparently there was nothing wrong with that part of him. I could not fathom the mystery. It completely nonplussed me.

I glanced round the room; there were many photographs upon the walls, among them Cambridge "eights" and "fours"; and sure enough, there he was, rowing in those very crews; and in the football and tennis pictures he also appeared as one of the best of them all. And how neat and clean was his one-room house! Everything was in order. A water keg behind the stove to keep the water from freezing. A big barrel by the door in which to turn snow into water. A woodpile across the end of the room—enough to outlast any blizzard. Then when I glanced at him again, I noticed a crested signet ring upon his left little finger. Breakfast over, smoking began, and as he washed the dishes, I wiped them—but still I pondered. Then, at last, I grew brave. I would risk it. I would ask him:

"Why do you stay in bed?"

First he responded with a burst of laughter, then with the question:

"Why, what's the use of getting up?" and next with the statement: "I stay in bed all winter . . . or nearly so. It's the only thing to do. I used to get up, and go for my mail occasionally . . . at least, I did a few years ago, but too many times I walked the forty miles to the Hudson's Bay Company's Flying Post at Elbow Creek only to find no letters for me . . . so I chucked it all. Then, too, the first few winters I was here I used to do a little shooting, but I get all the game I want from the Indians now, so I have chucked the shooting, too. Now the only thing that gets me out of bed,



or takes me out of doors, is to watch which way the wind blows. Two winters ago, when I was away from here a week, the wind blew steadily from the north for five days or more, and my cattle ate so far into the south sides of the hay stacks that two of the stacks fell over on them and in that way I lost five head—they were smothered.”

Oo-koo-hoo, knocking the ashes from his pipe, began to tie his coat; apparently, he thought it was time we were going. I opened the album again, and glanced through it once more as I sat upon the edge of my strange host's bunk. I stopped my turning when I came to a photograph of a charming gentlewoman whose hair was done in an old-fashioned way so becoming to her character and beauty. She must have been twenty-three. He, then, was nearing forty. I thought his hand lingered a little upon the page. And when I commented on her beauty, I fancied his voice tremored slightly—anyway his pipe went out.

But Oo-koo-hoo, getting up, broke the silence.

I invited my still-unknown host to pay me a visit. We shook hands heartily, and as I turned to close the door, I noticed that he had lain down again, and had covered up his head. As a pleasant parting salutation—a cheering one as I thought—I exclaimed:

“Perfectly stunning! . . . the most beautiful lot of women I have ever seen!”

And then from beneath the bed clothes came—

“Y-e-s . . . *the blighters!*”

## VII

### LIFE AND LOVE RETURN

#### HYMEN COMES WITH SPRING

"MY SON, it is ever thus, when spring is on the way," miled Oo-koo-hoo, as Granny entered with glee and displayed a new deerskin work-bag, containing needles, thread, thimble, and scissors; a present from Shing-wauk—The Little Pine—Neykia's lover.

"Now that Spring and Love are going to hunt together," further remarked the Indian, "the snow will run away, and the ice begin to tremble when it hears the home-coming birds singing among the trees. Ah, my son, it reminds me of the days of my youth," sighed The Owl, "when I, too, was a lover."

"Tell me," I coaxed.

"It was many years ago, at the New Year's dance at Fort Perseverance that I first met Ojistoh. She was thirteen then, and as beautiful as she was young. . . . No; I shall never forget those days . . . When she spoke her voice was as gentle as the whispering south wind, and when she ran she passed among the trees as silently and as swiftly as a vanishing dream; but now," added Oo-koo-hoo, with a sly, teasing glance at his wife, "but now look at her, my son . . . She is nothing but a bundle of old wrinkled leather, that makes a noise like a she-wolf that has no mate, and when she waddles about she goes thudding around on the split end of her body—like a rabbit with frozen feet."

But Granny, saying never a word, seized the wooden fire-poker, and dealt her lord and master such a vigorous blow

across the shoulders that she slew his chuckle of laughter the moment it was born. Then, as the dust settled, silence reigned. A little later, as Granny put more wood upon the fire, she turned to me with twinkling eyes and said:

"My son, if you could have seen the old loon when he was courting me, it would have filled your heart with laughter. It is true he was always a loon, for in those days Oo-koo-hoo, the great hunter, was even afraid of his own shadow, for he never dared call upon me in daylight, and even when he came sneaking round at night he always took good care that it was at a time when my father was away from home. Furthermore, he always chose a stormy evening when the snow would be drifting and thus cover his trail; and worse still, when he came to court me he always wore women's snowshoes; because, my son, he had not courage enough to come as a man."

This sally, however, only made Oo-koo-hoo smile the more as he puffed away at his brier.

"Did he always bring your grandmother a present?" I enquired.

"No, my son, not always, he was too stingy," replied the old woman, "but he did once in a while, I must grant him that."

"What was it?"

"Oh, just a few coils of tripe."

But Granny, of course, was joking, that was why she did not explain that deer tripe filled with blood was as great a delicacy as a suitor could offer his prospective grandmother-in-law; for among certain forest tribes, it is the custom that a marriageable daughter leaves the lodge of her parents and takes up her abode with her grandmother—that is, if the old lady is living within reasonable distance.

Shing-wauk—The Little Pine—had come that day, and had been invited to sleep in Amik's tepee; yet he spent the greater part of his time sitting with Neykia in her grandmother's lodge. As there are no cozy corners in a tepee, it is the Ojibway custom



for a lover to converse with his sweetheart under cover of a blanket which screens the lovers from the gaze of the other occupants of the lodge. Early in the evening the blanket always hung in a dignified way, as though draped over a couple of posts set a few feet apart. Later, however, the posts frequently lost their balance and swayed about in such a way as to come dangerously near colliding. Then, if the old grandmother did not speak or make a stir, the blanket would sometimes show that one support had given away. Accordingly, the old woman was able to judge by the general contour of the blanket just how the courtship was progressing, and being a foxy old dame she occasionally pretended to snore just to see what might happen.

One night, however, Granny's snoring was no longer pretense, and when she woke up from her nap, she found that both supports of the blanket were in immediate danger of collapsing. Seizing the stick with which she used to poke the fire, she leaped up and belaboured the blanket so severely that it lost no time in recovering its proper form.

Kissa Pesim (The Old Moon)—February, and Mikesewe Pesim (The Eagle Moon)—March, had flown and now Niske Pesim, (The Goose Moon)—April, had arrived; and with it had come the advance guard of a few of those numerous legions of migratory birds and fowls that are merely winter visitors to the United States, Mexico, and South America; while Canada is their real home—the place where they were born. Next would follow Ayeke Pesim (the Frog Moon) of May, when love would be in full play; then a little later would come Wawe Pesim (The Egg Moon) otherwise June, when the lovers would be living together—or nesting.

Yes, truly, the long-tarrying but wonderous Goose Moon had at last arrived, and at last, too, the spring hunt was on. It was now a joyous season accompanied with charming music rendered by the feathered creatures. Overhead the geese

where honking, out upon the lake the loons were calling, near the shore the ducks were quacking, while all through the woods the smaller birds were singing. Now, even among the shadows, the snow was slinking away; while the river ice, plunging along with a roar, ran down to the lake where it rested quietly in a space of open water.

Now, too, it so happened that day, that Neykia, she of woodland grace and beauty, was strolling in the sunshine with her Little Pine; while on every side the trees were shaking their heads and it seemed gossiping about the hunting plans of that reckless little elfin hunter, Hymen, who was hurrying overland and shooting his joyous arrows in every direction, till the very air felt charged with the whisperings of countless lovers. It made me think of the shy but radiant Athabasca, and I wondered—was her lover with her now?

#### THE SPRING HUNT

The Indians divide their annual hunt for fur into three distinct hunting seasons: the fall hunt—from autumn until Christmas; the winter hunt—from New Year's Day until Easter; and the spring hunt—from Easter until the hunters depart for their tribal summer camping ground. At the end of each hunting season—if the fur-runners have not traded with the hunters and if the hunter is not too far away from the post—he usually loads upon his sled the result of his fall hunt and hauls it to the Post during Christmas week; likewise he hauls to the Post the catch of his winter hunt about Easter time; while the gain from his spring hunt is loaded aboard his canoe and taken to the Post the latter part of May. Easter time, or the end of the winter hunt, marks the closing of the hunting season for all land animals except bear; and the renewing of the hunting season for bear, beaver, otter, mink, and muskrat, all water animals save the first.

Meanwhile, the canoes had been overhauled: freshly patched, stitched, and gummed, their thwarts strengthened, their ribs adjusted, and their bottoms greased.

A few days later, loading some traps and kit—among which was the hunter's bow and quiver of arrows—aboard his small canoe, Oo-koo-hoo and I set out at sunrise and paddling around the western end of Bear Lake, entered Bear River. It was a cold but delightful morning, and the effect of the sun shining through the rising mist was extremely beautiful. We were going otter- and muskrat-hunting; and as we descended that charming little stream and wound about amid its marshy flats and birch- and poplar-clad slopes, every once in a while ducks startled us by suddenly whirring out of the mist. Then, when long light lines of rippling water showed in the misty screen we knew that they were nothing but the wakes of swimming muskrats; and soon we glided into a colony of them; but for the time being they were not at home—the still-rising spring freshet had driven them from their flooded houses.

The muskrat's little island lodge among the rushes is erected upon a foundation of mud and reeds that rises about two feet before it protrudes above the surface of the water. The building material, taken from round the base, by its removal helps to form a deep-water moat that answers as a further protection to the muskrat's home. Upon that foundation the house is built by piling upon it more reeds and mud. Then the tunnels are cut through the pile from about the centre of the over-water level down and out at one side of the under-water foundation, while upon the top more reeds and mud are placed to form the dome-shaped roof, after which the chamber inside is cleared. The apex of the roof rises about three feet above the water. In some localities, however, muskrats live in dens excavated in the banks of rivers or ponds. To these dens several under-water runways lead.

Muskrats feed principally on the roots and stalks of many



kinds of sub-aqueous plants. In winter time, when their pond is frozen over, and when they have to travel far under water to find their food, they sometimes make a point of keeping several water-holes open, so that after securing their food, they may rise at a convenient hole and eat their meal without having to make long trips to their house for the purpose. In order to keep the water-hole from freezing, they build a little house of reeds and mud over it. Sometimes, too, they store food in their lodges, especially the bulbous roots of certain plants.

Muskrats, like beavers, use their tails for signalling danger, and when alarm causes them to dive they make a great noise, out of all proportion to their size. Thus the greenhorn from the city is apt to take the muskrat's nightly plunges for the sound of deer leaping into water; and just in the same way does the sleepless tenderfoot mistake the thudding footfalls of the midnight rabbit for those of moose or caribou running round his tent.

Muskrats are fairly sociable and help one another in their work. They mate in April and their young are born about a month later. The Indians claim that they pair like the beaver, and that the father helps to take care of the children. The young number from three to eight. When they are full grown their coats are dark brown. In length muskrats measure about eighteen inches, while in weight they run from a pound and a half to two pounds.

Except in autumn, their range is exceedingly small, though at that season they wander much farther away from their homes. If danger threatens they are always ready to fight, and they prove to be desperate fighters, too. While slow on land, they are swift in water; and such excellent divers are they that in that way they sometimes escape their greatest enemy—the mink; though wolves, fishers, foxes, otters, as well as birds of prey and Indians are always glad to have a muskrat for dinner.



Oo-koo-hoo could even hear the strange clicking sound, caused by the muscular action of the hoofs in walking—a sound peculiar to a caribou. He cautiously went down on one knee, and there waited with his gun cocked and in position. Now anlered heads appeared beyond the openings between the snow-mantled trees. The hunter, taking aim, addressed them: "My brothers, I need your . . ." Then the violent report of his gun shattered the . . .

See Chapter VI





But to return to our muskrat hunt: Oo-koo-hoo, stringing his bow and adjusting an arrow, let drive at one of the little animals as it sat upon some drift-wood. The blunt-headed shaft just skimmed its back and sank into the mud beyond; the next arrow, however, bowled the muskrat over; and in an hour's time The Owl had eleven in his canoe. When I questioned him as to why he used such an ancient weapon, he explained that a bow was much better than a gun, as it did not frighten the other muskrats away, also it did not injure the pelt in the way shot would do, and, moreover, it was much more economical.

Occasionally Oo-koo-hoo would imitate the call of the muskrats; sometimes to arrest their attention, but more often to entice them within easy range of his arrows. If he killed them outright while they were swimming, they sank like stones; but when only wounded, they usually swam round on the surface for a while. Once, however, a wounded one dived, and, seizing hold of a reed, held on with its teeth in order to escape its pursuer; Oo-koo-hoo, nevertheless, eventually landed it in his canoe.

In setting steel traps for them the hunter placed the traps either in the water or on the bank at a spot where they were in the habit of going ashore, and to decoy them to that landing Oo-koo-hoo rubbed castoreum on the branches of the surrounding bushes—just in the same way as he did for mink or otter. Another way he had of setting traps was to cut a hole in the side of a muskrat's house, so that he could thrust in his arm and feel for the entrance to the tunnel, then he would set a trap there and close up the hole.

One day when he was passing a muskrat house that he had previously opened for that purpose and closed again, he discovered that the hole was again open. Thinking that the newly added mud had merely fallen out, he thrust his arm into the hole to reach for the trap, when without the slightest warning

some animal seized him by the finger. It was a mink that had been raiding the house; and in the excitement that followed, the brute escaped. The hunter, however, made little of his injury; chewing up a quid of tobacco, he placed it over the wound and bound it securely with a rag torn from the tail of his shirt.

Oo-koo-hoo explained that in winter time, when there was little snow, he often speared muskrats through the ice. The spear point is usually made of quarter-inch iron wire and attached to a seven-foot shaft. Much of the spearing he did at the rats' feeding and airing places—those little dome-shaped affairs made of reeds and mud that cover their water-holes. The hunter, enabled by the clearness of the ice, followed their runways and traced them to where the little fellows often sat inside their shelters. Knowing that the south side of the shelter is the thinnest side, The Owl would drive in his spear and impale the little dweller.

#### HUNTING THE OTTER

That afternoon Oo-koo-hoo set a number of traps for otter. When placed on land otter traps are set as for fox, though of course of a larger size, and the same statement applies to dead-falls; while the bait used for both kinds of otter traps is the same as that used for mink. The otter is an unusually playful, graceful, active, and powerful animal; but when caught in a trap becomes exceedingly vicious, and the hunter must take care lest he be severely bitten. Oo-koo-hoo told me that on one occasion, when he was hunting otters, he lost his favourite dog. The dog was holding an otter prisoner in a rocky pocket where the water was shallow, and the otter, waiting to attack the dog when off guard, at last got its chance, seized its adversary by the throat, and that was the end of the dog.

The otter is not only easily tamed, but makes a charming pet, as many a trader has proved; and it is one of the few

animals that actually indulge in a sport or game for the sheer sake of the thrill it affords. Thus the otter is much given to the Canadian sports of tobogganing and "shooting the chute," but it does it without sled or canoe; and at all seasons of the year it may be seen sharing its favourite slide—sometimes fifty or a hundred feet in length—with its companions. If in summer, the descent is made on a grassy or clayey slope down which the animals swiftly glide, and plunge headlong into deep water. If the sport takes place on a clay bank, the wet coats of the otters soon make the slide so slippery that the descent is made at thrilling speed. But in winter time the sport becomes general, as then the snow forms a more convenient and easier surface down which to slide. The otter, though not a fast traveller upon land, is a master swimmer, and not only does it pursue and overtake the speckled trout, but also the swift and agile salmon.

Otters den in the river or lake bank and provide an underwater entrance to their home. They mate in February and the young—never more than five, but more often two—are born in April; and though their food includes flesh and fowl—muskrats, frogs, and young ducks—it is principally composed of fish.

Though slow on land an otter often travels considerable distances, especially in winter time, when it goes roaming in search of open water. If pursued it has a protective way of diving into and crawling swiftly beneath the surface of the snow, in such a way that though its pursuer may run fast, he more often loses his quarry; I know, because I have experienced it.

The otter not only has its thick, oily, dark-brown fur to keep it warm, but also a thick layer of fat between its skin and body; and thus, seal-like, it seems to enjoy in comfort the coldest of winter water. Otters measure three or four feet in length and in weight run from fifteen to thirty pounds.



The Indians of the Strong Woods are very superstitious in relation to the otter. They not only refuse to eat the flesh, but they don't like to take the carcass home, always preferring to skin it where it is caught. Even then they dislike to place the skin in their hunting bag, but will drag it behind them on the snow. Also, Indian women refuse to skin an otter, as they have a superstition that it would prevent them from becoming mothers.

One afternoon, when Oo-koo-hoo and I were sitting on a high rock overlooking the rapids on Bear River, he espied an otter ascending the turbulent waters by walking on the river bottom. We watched the animal for some time. It was an interesting sight, as it was evidently hunting for fish that might be resting in the backwaters behind the boulders. Every time it would ascend the rapids it would rise to the surface and then quietly float down stream in the sluggish, eddying shore currents where the bushes overhung the bank. Then it would again dive and again make the ascent by crawling up the river bottom.

"My son, watch him closely, for if he catches a fish you will see that he always seizes it either by the head or tail, rarely by the middle, as the fish would then squirm and shake so violently that the otter would not like it. Sometimes, too, an otter will lie in wait on a rock at the head of a rapid, and when a fish tries to ascend to the upper reach of the river by leaping out of the water and thus avoiding the swift current, the otter will leap, too, and seize the fish in mid-air. It is a thrilling sight to see him do it."

The snow was going so rapidly and the water running so freely that Oo-koo-hoo felt sure the bears had now all left their dens, otherwise water might be trickling into their winter beds. So, for the next few days, the hunter was busily engaged in setting traps for bears, beavers, otters, minks, and muskrats; and thus the spring hunt went steadily on while the Goose

Moon waned and then disappeared, and in its place the Frog Moon shone.

## LITTLE PINE'S LOVE SONG

One sunny morning, while I was strolling along the beach, I heard the sound of distant drumming, and presently a youthful voice broke into song. It was The Little Pine singing to his sweetheart.

Now it was Maytime in the Northland. Tender grasses were thrusting their tiny blades from under last year's leaves and here and there the woodland's pale-green carpet was enriched with masses of varying colours where wild flowers were bursting into bloom. Yet the increasing power of the sun had failed to destroy every trace of winter—for occasional patches of snow were to be seen clinging to the shady sides of the steepest hills and small ice floes were still floating in the lake below. But as summer comes swiftly in the Great Northern Forest, spring loses no time in lingering by the way. Already the restless south wind was singing softly to the "Loneland" of the glorious days to come.

The forest and all her creatures, hearing the song of spring time, were astir with joyous life. Among the whispering trees the bees were humming, the squirrels chattering, and many kinds of birds were making love to one another.

No wonder Shing-wauk—The Little Pine—sang his love song, too, for was not his heart aflame with the spring time of life? Perched high among the branches of a pine the youth was relieving the monotony of his drumming by occasionally chanting. At the foot of the thickly wooded hillside upon which the pine stood the indolent waters of Muskrat Creek meandered toward Bear Lake. On the bank near the river's mouth stood the lodges, but neither Oo-koo-hoo nor Amik seemed to be at home; and the rest of the family may have been absent, too, for the dogs were mounting guard.

Again the boy beat his drum; louder and louder he sang his love song until his soft rich voice broke into a wail. Presently the door-skin of Granny's lodge was gently pushed aside, and Neykia stepped indolently forth.

Shading her eyes with her hand, the girl gazed at the hillside, but failed to discern her lover in the tree top. She listened awhile and then, upon hearing once more the love song above the beating of the drum, yielded to the dictates of her heart and began to climb the hill. Little Pine saw her coming, ceased his drumming, and slid down to hide behind the tree trunk.

A faintly marked woodland path led close by, and along it the maiden was advancing. As she came abreast of the tree the youth, in fun, gave a shout, and the maid—evidently pretending bashful alarm—took to flight.

Though fleet of foot, she suffered him to overtake her soon and catch her by the arm, and hold her while she feigned to struggle desperately for freedom. That won, she turned away with a laugh, sat down upon a bank of wild flowers, and with shyly averted face, began plucking them. Little Pine sat down beside her. A moment later she sprang up and with merry laughter ran into the denser forest, and there, with her lover swiftly following her, disappeared from view.

At sunset that evening Oo-koo-hoo and his wife sat smoking beside their fire; and when the hermit thrush was singing, the whippoorwill whippoorwilling, the owl oo-koo-hooing, the fox barking, the bull frog whoo-wonking, the gander honking, the otter whistling, the drake quacking, the squirrel chattering, the cock grouse drumming, and the wolf howling—each to his own chosen mate, the hunter turned to me and smiled:

“Do you hear Shing-wauk singing?”

I listened more attentively to the many mingling love songs of the forest dwellers, and sure enough, away off along the



shore, I could hear Little Pine singing to his sweetheart. It was charming.

#### THE LOVE DANCE

"My son," sighed Oo-koo-hoo, "it reminds me of the days when I, too, was a boy and when Ojistoh was a girl, away back among the many springs of long ago."

"Yes, Nar-pim," smiled Granny—for an Indian woman never calls her husband by his name, but always addresses him as Nar-pim, which means "my man."

"Yes, Nar-pim, don't you remember when I heard that drumming away off among the trees, and when I, girl-like, pretended I did not know what it meant, but you, saying never a word and taking me by the hand, led me to the very spot where that handsome little lover was beating his drum and making love to so many sweethearts?"

"Yes, I remember it well, when I took little Ojistoh, my sweetheart, by the hand and we hurried to find the little drummer." Then, turning to me, the hunter continued: "My son, one never forgets the days of his youth, and well can I recall picking our way in and out among the trees and undergrowth, tiptoeing here and there lest our moccasined feet should break a fallen twig and alarm the drummer or the dancers. For it was the love dance we were going to see. As the drumming sound increased in volume, our caution increased, too. Soon we deemed it prudent to go down upon our hands and knees and thus be more surely screened by the underbrush as we stealthily approached. Creeping on toward the sound, slowly and with infinite precaution, we discovered that we were not the only ones going to the dance: the whirring of wings frequently rustled overhead as ruffed grouse skimmed past us in rapid flight.

"Once, my son, we felt the wind from a hawk's wing swoop-

ing low from bush to bush, as though endeavouring to arrive unheralded. Twice we caught sight of a fox silently and craftily stealing along. Once we saw a lynx—a soft gray shadow—slinking through the undergrowth ahead. It seemed as if all the Strong Woods dwellers were going to the love dance, too, and, I remember, Ojistoh began to feel afraid. But,” smiled Oo-koo-hoo, “she was devoured with curiosity; and, besides, was not her young lover with her? Why need she fear?”

“When we came to the foot of a ridge the drumming sounded very near. With utmost wariness we crawled from bush to bush, pausing every now and then, and crouching low. Then, judging the way still clear, we crawled forward, and finally gained the top of the ridge. With thumping hearts we rested a moment in a crouching posture, for we had at last arrived upon the scene. Slowly and breathlessly raising our heads, we peered through the leafy screen and beheld the love dance in full swing.

“And there, my son, on a clear sandy opening in the wood, twenty or thirty partridge hens were dancing in a semicircle, in the centre of which, perched upon a rotten log, a beautiful cock partridge drummed. He was standing with his small head thrust forward upon a finely arched neck which was circled by a handsome outstanding black ruff, fully as wide as his body. His extended wings grazed his perch, while his superb tail spread out horizontally.

“‘Chun—chun—chun—chun—chun-nnnnnnnnnnnnnnnnn,’ he hissed slowly at first, but with steadily increasing rapidity. His bill was open; his bright eyes were gleaming; his wings were beating at such a rate that the forest resounded with the prolonged roll of his drumming. Again and again he shrilled his love call, and again and again he beat his wondrous accompaniment. Every little while the whirring of swiftly moving wings was heard overhead as other hens flew down to join in the love dance. To and fro strutted the cock bird in all his

pride of beauty—his wings trailing upon the log, his neck arched more haughtily than ever, his ruff rising above his head, and his handsome fan-like tail extended higher still.

“Meanwhile, my son, the hens, too, were strutting up and down, and in and out among their rivals; some, with wings brushing upon the ground; others, with a single wing spread out, against which they frequently kicked the nearest foot as they circled round each other. A continuous hissing was kept up, along with a shaking of heads from side to side, a ceremonious bowing, and a striking of bills upon the ground. But—though the cock was doing his best to dazzle them with the display of his charms—the hens appeared unconscious of his presence and indifferent to his advances.

“There Ojistoh and I were gazing in silent admiration at the scene before us, when—without the slightest warning, and as though dropped from the sky—another cock landed in the midst of the dancers. Immediately the cock of the dance rushed at the intruder and fiercely attacked him.

“But the newcomer was ready. My son, you should have seen them. Bills and wings clashed together. In a moment feathers were flying and blood was running. But the hens never paused in their love dance. Again and again the feathered fighters dashed at each other, only to drop apart. Then, facing each other with drooping wings, ruffled plumes, extended necks, lowered heads, and gaping bills, they would gasp for breath. A moment later they would spring into the air and strike viciously at each other with bill and wing, then separate again. The sand was soon strewn with feathers and sprinkled with blood, yet the belligerents kept renewing the deadly conflict. Unconcernedly, all the while, the stupid hens tripped to and fro in the evolutions of their love dance.

“Already the intruder’s scalp was torn; the left wing of the cock of the dance was broken; and both were bleeding copiously. It was a great fight, my son, and the end was near. At the



next rush the intruder knocked the cock of the dance down, and leaping upon him, drove his bill into his skull, killing him.

"After a brief rest to recover breath, the victor jumped over his late rival's body, took a short leap into the air, gave a back kick of contempt, flew up on the log, and looked round as though seeking for female applause. But the hens, with apparently never a thought of him, still kept up their dancing. Presently he, too, sounded his love call and drummed his accompaniment. Then, strutting up and down, he inspected the dancers. When he had made up his mind as to which was the belle of the dance, he made a rush for her.

"But, my son, at that very moment a lynx sprang through the air, seized him by the neck, and bounded off with him among the bushes. In the confusion that followed, the hens flew away and I, seizing Ojistoh, kissed her. Startled, she leaped up, and with laughter ran away, but in hot pursuit I followed her."

#### THE WAYS OF THE FEMALE

"Ah, my son," commented Granny with a smile and a shake of her head as she drew her pipe from her mouth, "Nar-pim has always been like that . . . but he was worse in the days of his youth . . . fancy him taking a little girl to see the love dance . . . the old rabbit!"

"The old rabbit . . . indeed?" Oo-koo-hoo questioned. "Why, it was just the other way round. It was you who wanted me to take you there; it was your hypocritical pretence of innocence that made me do it; and though, as you said, I took your hand, it was you who was always leading the way."

Then was renewed the ancient and never-settled question as to who was at fault, the old Adam or the old Eve; but as Granny usually got the better of it by adding the last word, Oo-koo-hoo turned to me in disgust and grunted:

"Listen to her . . . why, my son, it has always been the female that did the courting . . . all down through the Great, Great Long Ago, it has ever been thus . . . and so it is to-day. Look at the cow of the moose, the doe of the deer, the she of the lynx, the female of the wolf, the she of the bear, the goose, the duck, the hen, and the female of the rabbit. What do they do when they want a mate? . . . They bellow and run, they meow and bow, they howl and prance, they twitter and dance . . . just as women have always done. And when the male comes, what does the female do? She pretends indifference, she feigns innocence, she runs away, and stops to listen, *afraid lest she has run too far*; and then, if he does not follow, she comes deceitfully back again and pretends not even to see him. Remember, my son, that though the female always runs away, she never runs so fast that she couldn't run faster; and it makes no difference whether the female has wings or fins, flippers or feet, it is all the same . . . the female always does the courting."

No doubt, had they ever met, Oo-koo-hoo and George Bernard Shaw would have become fast friends; for George, too, insists on the very same thing. But does not the average man, from his great store of conceit, draw the flattering inference that it is he and he alone who does the courting, and that his success is entirely due to his wonderful display of physical and mental charm; while the average woman looks in her mirror and laughs in her sleeve—less gown.

Though for some time silence filled the tepee and the dogs were asleep beside the door, the pipes still glowed; and Oo-koo-hoo, stirring the fire, mused aloud:

"But, perhaps, my son, you wonder why the hen partridges dance that way and why the cock drums his accompaniment?"

"It does seem strange," I replied.

"But not, my son, if you know their history. It is an old, old story, and it began away back in the Great, Great, Long

Ago, even before it was the custom of our people to marry. It happened this way: Once there was an old chief who used oftentimes to go away alone into the woods and mount upon a high rock and sing his hunting songs and beat his drum. Since he was much in favour, many women would come and listen to his songs; also, they would dance before him—to attract his attention.

“Now it came to pass on a certain day that a young chief of another tribe happened by chance upon that way. Hearing the drumming, he resolved to find out what it was about. Deep into the heart of the wood he followed the sound and came upon an open glade wherein were many women dancing before a huge boulder. Wondering, with great admiration, the young chief gazed upon their graceful movements and comely figures, and determined to rush in and capture the most beautiful of them. Turning thought into act, he bounded in among the dancers, and, to his amazement, discovered the old chief, who, at sight of him, dropped his drum, grasped his war club, and leaping down from his rocky eminence, rushed upon the young interloper in a frenzy of jealous fury. The women made no outcry; for, like the female moose or caribou, they love the victor. So to the accompaniment of the men’s hard breathing and the clashing of their war clubs, they went unconcernedly on with their love dance. In the end the young chief slew the older one, and departed in triumph with the women. But, my son, when the Master of Life learned what had happened, he was exceeding wroth; insomuch that he turned the young chief and the women into partridges. That is why the partridges dance the love dance even to this day.”

#### HUNTING WILD FOWL

Next morning, while Oo-koo-hoo was examining a muskrat lodge from his canoe, he heard a sudden “honk, honk,” and



looking up he espied two Canada geese flying low and straight toward us; seizing his gun, he up with it and let drive at one of the geese as it was passing beyond him, and brought it down. He concluded that they had just arrived from the south and were seeking a place to feed. Later, we encountered at close range several more and the hunter secured another.

As they were the first geese he had killed that season, he did not allow the women to touch them, but according to the Indian custom, dressed and cooked them himself; also, at supper time, he gave all the flesh to the rest of us, and saved for himself nothing but the part from which the eggs came. Further, he cautioned us not to laugh or talk while eating the geese, otherwise their spirits would be offended and he would have ill-luck for the rest of the season. And when the meal was finished he collected all the bones and tossed them into the centre of the fire, so that they would be properly consumed instead of allowing the dogs to eat them; and thus he warded off misfortune.

As we sat by the fire that night Oo-koo-hoo busied himself making decoys for geese, by chopping blocks of dry pine into rough images of their bodies, and fashioning their necks and heads from bent willow sticks; as well as roughly staining the completed models to represent the plumage. And while he worked he talked of the coming of the birds in spring.

“My son, the first birds to arrive are the eagles; next, the snow-birds and the barking crows (ravens); then the big gray (Canada) geese, and the larger ducks; then the smaller kinds of geese and the smaller kinds of ducks; and then the robins, blackbirds, and gulls. Then, as likely as not, a few days later, what is called a ‘goose winter’—a heavy, wet snowstorm followed by colder weather—may come along and try to drive the birds all back again; but before the bad weather completes its useless work a timely south wind may arrive, and with the aid of a milder spell, will utterly destroy the ‘goose winter’.

Then, after that, the sky soon becomes mottled with flying birds of many kinds: gray geese, laughing geese, waveys, and white geese, as well as great flocks of ducks of many kinds; also mud-hens, sawbills, waders, plovers, curlew, pelicans, swans, and cranes, both white and gray. Then another great flight of little birds as well as loons. And last of all may come the little husky geese that travel farther north to breed their young than do those of any other kind."

The next day the hunters built a "goose stand" on the sandy beach of Willow Point by making a screen about six feet long by three feet high of willow branches; and, as the ground was wet and cold, a brush mattress was laid behind the screen upon which the hunters could sit while watching for geese. The site was a good one, as Willow Point jutted into the lake near a big marsh on its south side. Beyond the screen they set their decoys, some in the water and others on the sand, but all heading up wind. When they shot their first geese, the hunters cut off the wings and necks together with the heads and fastened them in a natural way upon the decoys.

Oo-koo-hoo told me that when one wished to secure geese, he should be in readiness to take his position behind the stand before the first sign of morning sun. Furthermore, he told me that geese were usually looking for open water and sandy beaches from eight to nine o'clock; from ten to twelve they preferred the marshes in order to feed upon goose grass and goose weed, as well as upon the roots and seeds of other aquatic plants. Then from noon to four o'clock they sought the lakes to preen themselves; while from four to six they returned to the sandy beaches and then resorted to the marshes in which to spend the night. That was the usual procedure for from ten to fifteen days, then away they went to their more northern breeding grounds where they spent midsummer.

Seeing a hawk soaring overhead, Oo-koo-hoo said it reminded him of a hawk that once bothered him by repeatedly swooping

down among his dead-duck decoys, and each time he had to rush from his blind to drive the hawk away or it would have carried away one of his dead ducks; and being short of ammunition, he did not care to waste a shot. But he ended the trouble by taking up all his dead ducks save one. Then he removed the pointed iron from his muskrat spear, and ramming the butt of the iron into the sand, left it standing up beside the duck as though it had been a reed. The next time the hawk swooped down, he let it drive with full force at the dead duck, and thus impale itself on the muskrat spear.

But one day, after the geese had passed on their northward journey, Oo-koo-hoo began making other decoys of a different nature, and when I questioned him, he replied that he was going to kill a few loons with his bow and arrow, as Granny wished to use the skins of their necks to make a work-bag for the Factor's wife at Fort Consolation. After shaping the decoys, he mixed together gunpowder, charcoal, and grease with which to paint the decoys black—save where he left spots of the light-coloured wood to represent the white markings of those beautiful birds. When the decoys were eventually anchored in the bay they bobbed about on the rippling water quite true to life and they even took an occasional dive, when the anchor thong ran taut.

#### OO-KOO-HOO'S COURTING

After supper, when we were talking about old customs, I questioned Oo-koo-hoo as to how the Indians married before it was the custom to go to the Post to get the clergyman to perform that rite; and in reply he said:

“My son, Ojistoh and I were married both ways, so I don't think I can do better than to tell you how our own marriage took place. It was this way, my son: one night, when old Noo-koom, Ojistoh's grandmother, became convinced that we lovers had sat under the blanket long enough, she decided that



it was time we sat upon the brush together, or were married. Accordingly, she talked the matter over with Ojistoh's parents. They agreed with her, and Ojistoh's father said: 'It is well that Oo-koo-hoo and Ojistoh should be married according to the custom of our people, but it is also well that we should retain the friendship of the priest and the nuns. On our return to Fort Perseverance, therefore, the children must be married in the face of the Church; but I charge you all not to let any one at the Post know that Oo-koo-hoo and Ojistoh have already been married after the custom of our people. It is well that we should live according to the ways of our forefathers, and it is also well that we should seem to adopt the ways of the white man. Now call Ojistoh, and let me hear what she has to say.'

"When Ojistoh came in, her father told her that I was a good boy; that I would certainly make a successful hunter; and that, if she would sit upon the brush with me, they would give her plenty of marrow grease for her hair and some porcupine quills for her moccasins. They might even buy her some ribbon, beads, and silk thread for fancy work. Furthermore, they said I would be given enough moose skins to make a lodge covering.

"Ojistoh chewed meditatively upon the large piece of spruce gum in her mouth, while she listened with averted eyes and drooping head. But old Noo-koom, evidently supposing Ojistoh to be in doubt, interposed: 'You must sit upon the brush with him, because I have promised that you would. Did we not eat the fat and the blood, and use the firewood he left at our door?'

"The remembrance, no doubt, of all that dainty eating decided Ojistoh, and she gave her word that she would sit upon the brush with me if they would promise to buy her a bottle of perfume when they returned to Fort Perseverance. When Ojistoh left the lodge, her father said to me:

"'Listen, my boy, Noo-koom tells me that you have been sitting under the blanket with my daughter Ojistoh. She is a

good girl and will make you happy; for she can make good moccasins.'

"'Yes,' I replied, 'I know the girl and I want her.'

"'To-morrow, then,' said her father, 'you must sit upon the brush with her. I will tell the women to prepare the feast.'

"Next morning Ojistoh sat waiting in her lodge for me to come. Already she wore the badge of womanhood, for not having a new dress she had simply reversed her old one and buttoned it up in front instead of the back. For it is the custom of Ojibway girls to button their dresses behind and for married women to button theirs in front.

"My son, you should have seen me that morning, for I was bedecked in all my finery, and upon entering Noo-koom's lodge, I seized Ojistoh by the hair of her head, and dragged her out. Her struggles to escape from me were quite edifying in their propriety. Her shrieks were heartrending—or rather, they would have been had they not alternated with delighted giggles. By that time the wedding march had begun; for as we struggling lovers led the way, the children, bubbling with laughter, followed; and the old people brought up the rear of the joyous procession. We, the happy couple, tussled with each other until we reached a spot in the bush where I had cleared a space and laid a carpet of balsam brush beside a fire. There I deposited her. With a final shriek she accepted the new conditions, and at once set about her matrimonial duties, while the others returned to their lodges to put the finishing touches to the wedding breakfast.

"Oh, yes, my son, those were happy days," continued the hunter. "There, beside a great fire in the open, was laid a carpet of brush, in the centre of which a blanket was spread, and upon it the feast. There were rabbits, partridges, and fish roasted upon sticks. In a pot, boiled fresh moose and caribou meat; in another, simmered lynx entrails, bear fat, and moose steak. In a third, stewed ducks and geese. In a fourth, bubbled

choice pieces of beaver, muskrat, lynx, and skunk. Besides, there were caribou tongues, beaver tails, bear meat, and foxes' entrails roasted upon the coals. Strong tea in plenty, fresh birch syrup, forest-made cranberry wine, a large chunk of dried Saskatoon berries served with bear's grease, frozen cranberries, and a little bannock made of flour, water, and grease, completed the fare.

"Then, too, Ojistoh sat beside me and ate out of my dish. She even used my pipe for an after-dinner smoke. Then, after an interval of rest, dancing began, by the dancers circling the fire to the measured beat of a drum. Round and round we moved in silence. Then, breaking into a chant, we men faced the women, and from time to time solemnly revolved. But the women never turned their backs upon the fire. It was rather slow, monotonous measure, only relieved by the women and children throwing feathers at one another. Between each dance the company partook of refreshments, and so the festivity proceeded until daylight. Next morning Ojistoh's father gave us some wholesome advice and then we set up housekeeping on our own account, and, as you see, have continued it even to this day; haven't we, my little Ojistoh?" smiled the old hunter at his wife.

#### NATURE'S SANCTUARIES

One Sunday morning, when spring was all a-dance to the wondrous wild music of the woods, I sat in the warmth of the sun and thought of my Creator. Later, I learned that Oo-koo-hoo and Amik were also thinking of Him; for in the wilderness one often thinks of The Master of Life. That morning I thought, too, of the tolling of village church bells and of cathedral chimes, and I contrasted those metallic sounds with the beautiful singing of the birds of the forest; also I contrasted the difference of a Sunday in the city with a Sunday in the wilder-



ness; and my soul rested in supreme contentment. Yet the ignorant city dwellers think of the wilderness as "God-forsaken." Hunt the world over, and could one find any more holy places than some of Nature's sanctuaries? I have found many, but I shall recall but one, a certain grove on the Alaskan border.

It was in one of the wildest of all wild regions of the northern world. "God-forsaken" . . . indeed? In truth, it seemed to be the very home of God. There, between the bases of two towering perpendicular ranges of mountains, mantled by endless snows and capped by eternal ice, lay the wildest of all box-cañons: one end of which was blocked by a barrier of snow hundreds of feet high and thousands of feet thick—the work of countless avalanches; while the other end was blocked by a barrier of eternal ice thousands of feet in width and millions of tons in weight—a living and growing glacier. And there, away down at the very bottom of that wild gorge, beside a roaring, leaping little river of seething foam, grew a beautiful grove of trees; and never a time did I enter there but what I thought of it as holy ground—far more holy than any cathedral I have ever known . . . for there, in that grove, one seemed to stand in the presence of God.

There, in that grove, the great reddish-brown boles of Sitka spruces—four and five feet in diameter—towered up like many huge architectural columns as they supported the ruggedly beamed and evergreen ceiling that domed far overhead. High above an altar-like mass of rock, completely mantled with gorgeously coloured mosses, an opening shone in the gray-green wall, and through it filtered long slanting beams of sunlight, as though coming through a leaded, sky-blue, stained-glass window of some wonderful cathedral. While upon the grove's mossy floor stood, row upon row, a mass of luxuriant ferns that almost covered the velvet carpet, and seemed to form endless seats in readiness for the coming of some congrega-

tion. But on only one occasion did I ever see a worshipper there.

Weary from the weight of a heavy pack—seventy-five pounds of dynamite—I had paused to rest a moment in that wonderful place which so few human beings had ever discovered; where, too, on passing through, it was always my custom to remove my hat—just as any one would do on entering a church. There that day, as I stood gazing at the glorious sunbeams as they filtered through the great chancel window, I listened to the enchanting music of the feathered choir high overhead, that seemed to be singing to the accompaniment of one of Nature's most powerful organs—the roaring river—that thundered aloud, as, with all its force, it wildly rolled huge boulders down its rocky bed. Then, lowering my eyes, I discovered the one and only worshipper I ever saw there. He was standing near a side aisle in the shadow of an alcove, and he, too, was gazing up at those radiant sunbeams and listening to the choir; moreover, notwithstanding that he was a big brown bear, he appeared too devout even to notice me—perhaps because he, too, felt the holy presence of “The Great Mystery” . . . our God.

Yes, my friend, it is my belief that if there is any place on earth that is “God-forsaken,” it is not to be found in even the wildest part of the wildest wilderness, but in that cesspool called a city.

#### GOING TO THE POST

After half of May had passed away, and when the spring hunt was over, Oo-koo-hoo and Amik, poling up the turbulent little streams, and following as closely as possible the routes of their fur trails, went the round of their trapping paths, removed their snares, sprung their deadfalls, and gathering their steel traps loaded them aboard their canoes. That work com-

pleted, packing began in readiness for the postward journey; there, as usual, they would spend their well-earned holidays with pleasure upon their tribal summer camping grounds.

So, when all was in readiness, the deerskin lodge coverings were taken down, rolled up, and stored out of harm's way upon a stage. Then, with hearts light with happiness and canoes heavy with the wealth of the forest, we paddled away with pleasant memories of our forest home, and looked forward to our arrival at Fort Consolation.

Soon after entering Bear River the canoes were turned toward the western bank and halted at a point near one of their old camping grounds. Then Naudin—Amik's wife—left the others, and took her way among the trees to an opening in the wood. There stood two little wooden crosses that marked the graves of two of her children—one a still-born girl and the other a boy who had died at the age of three. Upon the boy's grave she placed some food and a little bow and some arrows, and bowed low over it and wept aloud. But at the grave of her still-born child she forgot her grief and smiled with joy as she placed upon the mound a handful of fresh flowers, a few pretty feathers, and some handsome furs. Sitting there in the warm sunshine, she closed her eyes—as she told me afterward—and fancied she heard the little maid dancing among the rustling leaves and singing to her.

Like all Indian women of the Strong Woods, she believed that her still-born child would never grow larger or older; that it would never leave her; that it would always love her, though she lived to be a great-grandmother; that when sorrow and pain bowed her low this little maid would laugh and dance and talk and sing to her, and thus change her grief into joy. That is why an Indian mother puts pretty things upon the grave of her still-born child, and that is why she never mourns over it.

As our journey progressed those enemies of comfort and pleasure, the black flies, appeared, and at sunrise and sunset



caused much annoyance, especially among the children. Then, too, at night if the breeze subsided, mosquitoes swarmed from the leeward side of bushes and drove slumber away.

One afternoon, while resting, we observed signs of beaver and Oo-koo-hoo, being reminded of an incident he once witnessed, related it to me:

"Once, my son, while paddling alone, I rounded the bend of a river, and hearing a splash just beyond the turn, silently propelled my canoe beneath a screen of overhanging branches. After waiting and watching awhile, I saw an otter fishing in the stream. A moment later I beheld a beaver—evidently a female—swimming just beyond the otter, and pursued by two other beavers—evidently males. The males, perceiving the otter swimming in the direction of the female, probably came to the conclusion that he was about to pay his court to her, for they suddenly swerved from their course and attacked the innocent otter. He dived to escape his assailants, and they dived after him. When he rose for breath, they came up, too, and made after him; so he dived again. Evidently, they were trying to wind their quarry, for whenever he came up for breath they endeavoured to reach him before he got it. In a short time they had so exhausted him that he refused to dive again before he gained his breath. He made for the shore. The beavers rushed after him, overtook him, and just as he gained the bank, ripped his throat open. Then I shot one of the beavers and tossed it into my canoe along with the otter."

The journey to the Post was a delight all the way—save when the flies were busy. One night those almost invisible little torments, the sand flies, caused us—or rather me—much misery until Granny built such a large fire that it attracted the attention of the little brutes, and into it they all dived, or apparently did—just as she said they would—for in less than half an hour not a single sand fly remained.

On our way to God's Lake we had considerable sport in the

way of shooting white-water. One morning we landed at the head of a portage, and, as the rapid was not a dangerous one, Oo-koo-hoo and Amik determined to run it, but first went ashore to examine the channel. On their return Oo-koo-hoo instructed the others to follow his lead about four canoe-lengths apart, so that in case of mishap they could help each other. Down the canoes plunged one after the other. The children wielded their little paddles, screaming with delight as they swiftly glided through the foaming spray past shores still lined here and there with walls of ice.

As the canoes rounded a sharp bend in the rapid Oo-koo-hoo descried a black bear walking on the ice that overhung the eastern bank. The animal seemed as much surprised as any of us, and, instead of making off, rose upon its haunches and gazed in amazement at the passing canoes. But as we swept by there was no thought of firing guns. The sight of the bear reminded Oo-koo-hoo of an experience some friends of his once had with a black bear; and when we reached slack water he told it to me.

The friends in question were a mother and her daughter, and late one afternoon they were returning from berry picking. As they rounded a bend in the river the daughter in the bow suddenly stopped paddling, and—without turning her face toward her mother in the stern—excitedly whispered: "*Muskwa! Muskwa!*"

Then as the older woman caught sight of a dark object fifty paces away, she uttered a few hurried commands. Both fell to paddling with all their might. With straining backs, stiffened arms, and bending blades, they fairly lifted the canoe at every stroke; and the waters gave a tearing sound as the slashing blades sent little whirlpools far behind. Their hearts were fired with the spirit of the chase, and—though their only weapons were their skinning knives—they felt no fear. On they raced to head the bear, who was swimming desperately

to gain the shore. They overhauled him. He turned at bay. The daughter soused a blanket in the water and threw it over his head. The mother in the stern reached over as the canoe glided by, seized him by an ear as he struggled blindly beneath the smothering mantle, and drove her knife into his throat. A broad circle of crimson coloured the water round the blanket. The canoe was quickly brought about; the mother slipped a noose over his head, and in triumph they towed the carcass to their camp.

On the last morning of our trip there was a flutter of pleasant excitement among our little party; and by the time the sun appeared and breakfast was over, everybody was laughing and talking, for we had made such progress that we expected to reach Fort Consolation by ten o'clock that forenoon. Quickly we loaded the canoes again, and away we paddled. In a few hours the beautiful expanse of God's Lake appeared before us. When we sighted the old fort, a joyous shout rang out; paddles were waved overhead, and tears of joy rose to the eyes of the women—and of some of the men.

Going ashore, we quickly made our toilets, donning our very finest in order to make a good appearance on our arrival at the Fort—as is the custom of the Northland. Bear's grease was employed with lavish profusion, even Oo-koo-hoo and Amik and the boys using it on their hair; while the women and girls greased and wove their tresses into a single elongated braid which hung down behind. The men put on their fancy silk-worked moccasins; tied silk handkerchiefs about their necks—the reverse of cow-boy fashion—and beaded garters around their legs; while the women placed many brass rings upon their fingers, bright plaid shawls about their shoulders, gay silk handkerchiefs over their heads, and beaded leggings upon their legs. How I regretted I had not brought along my top-hat—that idiotic symbol of civilization—for if I could have worn it on that occasion, the Indians at Fort Consolation would have



been so filled with merriment that they would have in all probability remembered me for many a year as the one white man with a sense of humour.

For in truth, it is just as Ohiyesa (Charles A. Eastman) the full-blooded Sioux, says in his book on Indian Boyhood: "There is scarcely anything so exasperating to me as the idea that the natives of this country have no sense of humour and no faculty for mirth. This phase of their character is well understood by those whose fortune or misfortune it has been to live among them day in and day out at their homes. I don't believe I ever heard a real hearty laugh away from the Indians' fireside. I have often spent an entire evening in laughing with them until I could laugh no more."

#### CONTEST OF WITS

When we arrived at Fort Consolation, Oo-koo-hoo and his party were greeted by a swarm of their copper-coloured friends, among whom were The Little Pine and his father, mother, and sister. Making his way through the press, The Owl strode toward the trading room to shake hands with Factor Mackenzie; but the trader, hearing of Oo-koo-hoo's arrival, hastened from his house to welcome the famous hunter; and The Owl greeted him with:

"*Quay, quay, Hu-ge-mow*" (good day, Master).

On their way to the Indian shop they passed the canoe shed, where skilled hands were finishing two handsome six-fathom canoes for the use of the Fur Brigade; and they stopped to examine them.

The building of a six-fathom or "North" canoe generally takes place under a shed erected for the purpose, where there is a clear, level space and plenty of working room. Two principal stakes are driven at a distance apart of thirty-six feet, the length of the craft to be. These are connected by two rows of

smaller stakes diverging and converging so as to form the shape of the canoe. The smaller stakes are five feet apart at the centre. Pieces of birch bark are soaked in water for a day and no more, sewn together with *wat-tap*—the roots of cedar or spruce gathered in spring—placed between the stakes with the outer side down, and then made fast. The well-soaked ribs are then put in place and as soon as they are loaded with stones the bark assumes its proper form. The gunwales, into which the ends of the ribs are mortised, are bound into position with *wat-tap*. The thwarts are next adjusted. The stones and stakes are then removed; the seams are covered with a mixture of one part grease to nine parts spruce gum; the craft is tested, and is then held in readiness for its maiden voyage.

On entering the Indian shop or trading room, Oo-koo-hoo was ready to talk about anything under the sun save business, as he wanted to force the Trader to solicit his patronage; but as the Factor was trying to make the hunter do the same thing, they parted company a little later without having mentioned the word "trade."

No wonder the Indians are glad to return to their tribal summer camping grounds; for it is there that they rest and play and spend their summer holidays. It is there, too, that the young people enjoy the most favourable opportunity for doing their courting; as every event—such as the departure or the return of the Fur Brigade—calls for a festival of dancing which not infrequently lasts for several days. Also, in many other ways, the boys and girls have chances of becoming acquainted. Since young hunters often claim their sweethearts during the winter, many "marriages" take place after the Indian fashion. On their return to the Post, however, the young couples are generally married over again, and this time after the white man's custom—"in the face of the Church." The way the young people "keep company" at the summer camping

grounds presents no feature of special interest. It is during the winter season in the forest many miles beyond the Post that the old customs have full sway. The re-marrying the young couples "in the face of the Church" frequently demands extreme vigilance, for in the confusion of the matrimonial busy season when the Indians first come in the little papoose is apt to be christened—unless the clergyman is very careful—before the parents have had time to arrange for their church wedding.

Meanwhile, the women having erected the canvas lodge and put in order one of their last-year's birch-bark wigwams, called upon the Factor's wife and presented her with a handsome work-bag made of beautifully marked skins from the necks of the loons Oo-koo-hoo had shot with his bow and arrow for that purpose.

After leaving the Indian shop, the hunter returned to his camp to talk matters over with Amik and the women. He told them that he intended selling most of his furs to the Company, but that he thought it wise to stay away from the Factor until next day. But as Granny, being a Roman Catholic, wanted to have Father Jois marry Neykia and The Little Pine, she suggested that Oo-koo-hoo go and call upon the priest at once. Notwithstanding that her mother was a Presbyterian, Neykia had joined the Roman Catholic Church and when asked why she had done so, she said it was because she thought the candles looked so pretty burning on the altar.

Though The Owl was not in the least interested in any one of the white man's many religions, nor in the priest, the clergyman, or the minister of the three different denominations represented at the Post, he now called upon the priest as his wife wished him to. During the course of their conversation the priest said:

"My son, that was a beautiful silver fox you sold the Com-



pany three years ago. I, myself, would have paid you well for it."

"Would you look as well upon a black fox?" asked Oo-koo-hoo in surprise, as it is an unwritten law of the country that missionaries are not to carry on trade with the Indians.

"Yes. Have you one?" questioned the priest.

"I have never seen a finer," replied the hunter.

"But do either of the traders know you have it?" asked the priest.

"No," answered Oo-koo-hoo, with a shake of his head.

Later, when the priest saw the skin, he was delighted with it, and a bargain was soon made. Oo-koo-hoo was to get one hundred "skins" for the black fox, and he was told to call next day. But after returning to camp, he grew impatient and went back to the priest to demand his pay. The priest said he would give him a tent and a rifle worth more than fifty skins and that he would say ten masses for him and his family, which would be a very generous equivalent for the other fifty skins. But Oo-koo-hoo, suddenly flaring up, began to storm at the priest, and demanded the black fox back. But the priest sternly motioned for silence with upraised hand, and whispered: "This is God's House. There must be no noise or anger here." And without another word he withdrew to get the rifle and the tent. When he returned with an old tent and a second-hand rifle, Oo-koo-hoo would not deign to touch them. Without more ado, he turned on his heel and walked away.

On reaching camp, the old hunter learned from the children that the women had gone to pay a visit to the nuns; so he followed them, and, without even speaking to the Sisters, ordered the women to come home. On the way he eased his wrath by telling them that never again would he buy prayers or masses from the priest with black fox skins, and that if they ever wanted masses, he would pay for them with nothing but the skins of skunks. He did not see why he had to pay for

masses, anyway, when Free Trader Spear had made them a standing offer of all the prayers they wanted free of charge, provided that he, Oo-koo-hoo, would trade with him. He added that he had half a mind to accept Spear's offer, just to spite the priest.

So after meditating for a while upon his steadfast belief that any fool of an Indian is better than a white man, and that the only good white men are the dead ones, he got into his canoe and paddled across the lake to interview the opposition trader.

When he told Spear what a splendid black fox he had, and how the priest had already offered him a hundred skins for it, the Free Trader said:

"I'll give you a hundred and ten for it," and the old reprobate added, "and I'll throw into the bargain half-a-dozen prayers for the women."

The offer was at once accepted. On handing over the goods to Oo-koo-hoo, the trader asked where the black fox was, and was told that it was in keeping of the priest. So without delay Mr. Spear paddled back with The Owl to get the skin. When the priest learned how the hunter had stolen a march on him, he was righteously indignant; but he dared not complain, since he was not supposed to deal in furs. There was nothing to do but hand over the magnificent skin to the Free Trader although he knew right well that in London or Paris it would bring twenty times the price paid for it.

Next day old Granny came crying to Oo-koo-hoo and complaining that the priest had refused to officiate at the wedding on the day agreed upon. The nuns had told her that his refusal was due to his determination to discipline The Owl for his rudeness and irreverence. That seemed to worry the hunter considerably, for, though he cared nothing for the priest's benediction, he did want the wedding to come off upon the day appointed. It touched his pride to be balked in his

plans. He had already invited all the Indians at the Post to the ceremony. Great preparations were being made. If the wedding were put off even a single day, everybody would be curious to know why; and sooner or later it would be known that he had had to bow to the will of the priest. The thought rankled. So he went to the Factor and told him the whole affair.

"Ma brither," said the Factor, "we are auld freens; it is weel that we shud staun' thegither. If ye will trade a' yir furs wi' me this day, I'll get the meenister o' the Presybyterian Kirk tae mairry yir gran'dochter. He'll be gled eneuch tae gi'e Father Jois a clour by mairryin' twa o' his fowk. Sell me yir furs, an' I'll warrant ye ye'll hae the laff on Father Jois."

#### MISSIONARIES AND INDIANS

That settled it. Factor Mackenzie got all the furs Oo-koo-hoo and his family possessed. The Factor and the hunter were now the best of friends, and they even went so far as to exchange presents—and that's going some . . . for a Scotsman.

Should the foregoing amuse the Protestant reader, the following may be of interest to the Roman Catholic. One winter, while halting at a certain Hudson's Bay post, I met a Protestant clergyman, who having spent a number of years as a missionary among the natives on the coast of Hudson Bay excited my interest as to his work among the Indians. That night, after supper, I questioned him as to his spiritual work among the "barbarians" of the forest, and in the presence of the Hudson's Bay trader, he turned to me and, with the air of being intensely bored by the subject, he replied: "Mr. Heming . . . the only interest I ever take in the Indian . . . is when I bury him."

But while I have cited two types of clergymen I have known



—the name of the priest being, of course, fictitious—merely to point out the kind of missionaries that should never be sent among the Indians, I not only wish to state that they are very much the exception to the rule, but I also want to make known my unbounded respect and admiration for that host of splendid men—and women—of all denominations, who have devoted their lives to the spiritual welfare of the people of the wilderness, and some of whom have already left behind them hallowed names of imperishable memory.

But the lot of the missionary among the Indians is not altogether a joyous one. In his distant and isolated outpost there are privations to endure and hardships to suffer. Frequently, too, it happens that he is placed in a position exceedingly embarrassing to a man of gentle breeding and kindly spirit.

A well-known Canadian priest was being entertained by an Indian family. The hospitable old grandmother undertook to prepare a meal for him. Determined to set before the “black-robe” a really dainty dish—something after the fashion of a Hamburg steak—and possessing no machine for mincing the meat, she simply chewed it up nice and fine in her own mouth. After cooking it to a turn, she set it before her honoured guest, and was at a loss to understand why the good man had so suddenly lost his appetite.

But there is often a brighter and also a graver side to the missionary’s life among the red men. Incidents occur which appeal irresistibly to his sense of humour.

One Sunday afternoon a certain noted bishop of the English Church in Canada, who had spent most of his life as a missionary in the far Northwest, was discoursing at considerable length to a band of Dog-rib Indians camped at the mouth of Hay River on Great Slave Lake. His Lordship dwelt earnestly upon the virtue of brotherly love, and enlarged upon the beauty of the Divine saying— “It is more blessed to give than to re-

ceive." After the service an old Indian walked up to the preacher, piously repeated the sacred text, and intimated that he was prepared to become the humble instrument for bringing upon his reverence the promised blessing. To that end he was willing to receive his lordship's hat.

The good bishop was taken aback. Realizing, however, that there was nothing else for him to do, he took off his hat and bestowed it with commendable cheerfulness upon his new disciple.

Another red man, jealous of his brother who was now parading in all the splendour of the bishop's hat, claimed upon the same ground the prelate's gaiters, and received them.

The two Indians, envious each of the other's acquisition, began to discuss with growing anger the comparative value of the articles. Unable to arrive at an agreement, they resolved to put up the hat and gaiters as a stake and gamble for them.

The impressive head-gear and antique gaiters of an Anglican bishop never appeared to greater advantage than they did upon the old Indian, the winner of the game, when he proudly strutted before his dusky, admiring brethren, displaying on head and bare legs the Episcopal insignia, and having for his only other garment an old shirt whose dingy tail fluttered coyly in the summer breeze.

#### NEYKIA'S WEDDING

At ten o'clock, on the morning of Neykia's wedding, a motley mass of natives clothed in many colours crowded about the little church, which, for lack of space, they could not enter. Presently the crowd surged back from the door and formed on either side of the path, leaving an opening down the centre. A tall half-breed with a shock of wavy black hair stepped from the doorway, raised his violin, and adjusting it into position, struck up a lively tune to the accompaniment of the

After half of May had passed away, and when the spring hunt was over, Oo-koo-hoo and Amik, poling up the turbulent little streams, and following as closely as possible the routes of their fur trails, went the round of their trapping paths, removed their snares, sprung their dead falls, and gathering up their steel traps, loaded them aboard their canoes. That work completed, packing began in readiness for the

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wailing of a broken concertina played by another half-breed who preceded the newly married couple. Neykia wore a silk handkerchief over her head, a light-coloured cotton waist open at the throat, a silk sash over one shoulder, and a short skirt revealing beaded leggings and moccasins. Behind the bride and groom walked Oo-koo-hoo and the fathers of the bridal couple, then the mothers and the rest of the relations, while the clergy and the other guests brought up the rear. As the little procession moved along, the men, lined up on either side of the path, crossed their guns over the heads of the wedding party, and discharged a *feu de joie*.

On reaching a certain log-house the procession broke up. The older people went in to partake of the wedding breakfast; while the bride and groom went over to one of the warehouses and amused themselves dancing with their young friends until they were summoned to the second table of the marriage feast. Everybody at the Post had contributed something toward either the feast or the dance. Out of respect for Oo-koo-hoo the Factor had furnished a liberal stock of groceries and had, in addition, granted the free use of the buildings. The clerk had sent in a quantity of candies and tobacco. The priest had given potatoes; the clergyman had supplied a copy of the Bible in syllabic characters; and the minister had given the silver-plated wedding ring. The nuns had presented a supply of skim-milk and butter. Mr. Spear provided jam, pickles, and coal-oil for the lamps. The Mounted Police contributed two dollars to pay for the "band"—the fiddle and the concertina—and ammunition enough for the *feu de joie*. The friends and relations had given a plentiful store of fresh, dried, and pounded fish; and had also furnished a lavish supply of moose, caribou, and bear meat; as well as dainty bits of beaver, lynx, muskrat, and skunk.

The bridal party having dined, they and their elders opened the ball officially. The first dance was—as it always is—the

Double Jig, then followed in regular order the same dances as those of the New Year's feast. After a frolic of several hours' duration some of the dancers grew weary and returned to the banquet room for refreshments. And thus for three days and three nights the festivities continued.

#### THE WEDDING SPEECHES

During a lull in the dancing on the afternoon of the wedding day Little Pine's sister went up to him and said: "Brother, may I kiss you? Are you ashamed?" He answered: "No." She kissed him, took his wife's hand, placed it in his with her own over both, and addressed the young wife:

"As you have taken my place, do to him as I have done; listen to him, work for him, and, if need be, die for him."

Then she lowered her head and began to cry.

Ne-Geek, The Otter, Neykia's oldest brother, then went up to Little Pine and asked:

"Are you man enough to work for her, to feed her, and to protect her?"

"Yes," replied the new-made husband.

The Otter put the husband's hand on his sister's hand, and—looking him straight in the eyes . . . shook his clenched fist at him and said in a threatening tone . . . "Beware!"

In the midst of one of the dances Oo-koo-hoo walked up to the "band" and knocked up the fiddle to command silence. Pulling his *capote* tightly about him, he assumed a dignified attitude, slowly looked round the room to see that he had the attention of all present, and began to address the assemblage:

"The step which Shing-wauk has taken is a very serious one. Now he will have to think for two. Now he must supply the wants of two. Now he will realize what trouble is.



But the One who made us . . . The Great Mystery . . . The Master of Life . . . made us right. The man has his work to do, and the woman has hers. The man must hunt and kill animals, and the woman must skin and dress them. The man must always stand by her and she by him. The two together are strong . . . and there is no need of outside assistance. Remember . . . my grandchildren . . . you are starting out together that way . . .”

To illustrate his meaning, he held up two fingers parallel, and added:

“If your tracks fork . . . they will soon be as far apart as sunrise is from sunset . . . and you will find many ready to come in between. Carry on in the way you have begun . . . for that is the way you should end. And remember . . . if your tracks once fork . . . they will never come together again . . . my grandchildren . . . I have spoken.”

After Little Pine’s father, as well as several of the guests, had made their remarks, Naudin, Neykia’s mother, rose to address her daughter. Overcome with nervousness, she pulled her shawl so far over her face as to leave only a tiny peep-hole through which to look. Hesitatingly she began:

“My daughter, you never knew what trouble is, now you will know. You never knew what hard work is, now you will soon learn. Never let your husband want for anything. Never allow another woman to do anything for him; if you do . . . you are lost. When you have children, my daughter, and they grow up, your sons will always be sons to you, even though they be gray-headed. But with your daughters it will not be so; when they marry, they will be lost to you. Once married, they are gone for ever.”

She stepped up to her daughter, kissed her, and sank to the floor, weeping copiously.

Then Amik rose to speak. He beckoned to his daughter.

She advanced and knelt down, holding the fringe of his legging while he addressed her:

“Neykia, my daughter, you have taken this man. Be good to him, work for him, live for him, and if need be, die for him. Kiss me, Neykia, my daughter; kiss me for the last time.”

She kissed him, and he added:

“You have kissed me for the last time: henceforth never kiss any man but your husband.”

Raising his hand with untutored dignity, he pronounced the words:

“Remember . . . I have spoken.”

## VIII

### BUSINESS AND ROMANCE

#### FAREWELL ATHABASCA

THOUGH Wawe Pesim (The Egg Moon), or June, had already brought summer to the Great Northern Forest, the beautiful Athabasca still waited in vain. Son-in-law had not yet appeared. After all—was he but a fond parents' dream? I wondered.

Soon the picturesque and romantic Fur Brigade would be sweeping southward on its voyage from the last entrenchments of the Red Gods to the newest outposts of civilization—a civilization that has debauched, infected, plundered, and murdered the red man ever since its first onset upon the eastern shores of North America. If you don't believe this, read history, especially the history of the American fur trade.

Meanwhile, canoes laden with furs and in charge of Hudson's Bay traders or clerks from outlying "Flying Posts" had arrived; and among the voyageurs was that amusing character, Old Billy Brass. A little later, too, Chief Factor Thompson arrived from the North. Now in the fur loft many hands were busily engaged in sorting, folding, and packing in collapsible moulds—that determined the size and shape of the fur packs—a great variety of skins. Also they were energetically weighing, cording, and covering the fur packs with burlap—leaving two ears of that material at each end to facilitate handling them, as each pack weighed eighty pounds.

A fur pack of one hundred pounds—for the weight varies according to the difficulty of transportation in certain regions—



contains on an average fourteen bear, sixty otter, seventy beaver, one hundred and ten fox skins, or six hundred muskrat skins. A pack of assorted furs contains about eighty skins and the most valuable ones are placed in the centre.

During the next few days the great "North" or six-fathom canoes—made of birch bark and capable of carrying from three to four tons of freight in addition to their crews of from eight to twelve men—were brought out of the canoe house, and together with the two new ones, had their bows and sterns painted white in readiness for their finishing touch of decoration in the way of some symbol of the fur trade.

As the principal Indian canoemen, who were to join the Fur Brigade, were already familiar with my ability as an artist, they waited upon the Factor and requested him to solicit my help in the final decorating of those beautiful canoes. So it came to pass that on the bow of one a leaping otter appeared and on the bows of others, a rearing bear, a flying goose, a rampant caribou, a galloping fox, a leaping lynx, a rampant moose, and on still another the coat-of-arms of the Hudson's Bay Company. Each in turn had its admirers, but Oo-koo-hoo, who was to have charge of all the voyageurs, sidled up to Factor Mackenzie and whispered that if Hu-ge-mow—Master—would let him take his choice of the canoes, he would not only give the Factor a dollar in return for the privilege, but he would promise to keep that particular canoe at the very head of the whole brigade, and never once allow another canoe to pass it during the voyage.

The Factor was not only interested in the Indian's appreciation of art, as well as amused over the idea that he would accept a bribe of a dollar, but he was curious to know which canoe the Indian most favoured. It was the one that displayed the Great Company's coat-of-arms; so Oo-koo-hoo, the famous white-water-man, not only won his choice and retained his dollar, but furthermore, he and his crew actually did keep

the bow of that canoe ahead of all others—no matter where or when the other crews contested for the honour of leading the Fur Brigade.

The next morning, at sunrise, the Fur Brigade was to take its departure. Now it was time I visited Spearhead, to thank my friends, the Free Trader and his family, for all their kindness to me, and to bid them farewell; so I borrowed a small canoe and paddled across the lake. When I arrived they invited me to dine with them. At the table that day there was less talking—everyone seemed to be in a thoughtful mood.

The windows and doors were open and the baggy mosquito netting sagged away from the hot sun as the cool breeze whispered through its close-knit mesh. Outside, I could see the heifer and her mother lying in the shade of a tree on the far side of the stump-lot, and near the doorway the ducks and geese were sauntering about the grass and every now and then making sudden little rushes—as though they were trying to catch something. There, too, in the pathway, the chickens were scratching about and ruffling their feathers in little dust holes—as though they were trying to get rid of something. An unexpected grunt at the doorway attracted my attention and I saw a pig leering at me from the corners of its half-closed eyes—the very same pig the Free Trader and his wife had chosen to add to their daughter's wedding dowry—then it gave a familiar little nod, as though it recognized me; and I fancied, too, that its ugly chops broke into an insolent smile. What was it thinking about? . . . Was it Son-in-law? I wondered.

I glanced at Athabasca. How beautiful she looked! The reflected sunlight in the room cast a delightful sheen over her lustrous brown hair, and seemed to enhance the beauty of her charmingly sun-browned skin, that added so much to the whiteness of her even teeth, and to the brilliancy of her soft brown eyes. In a dreamy way she was looking far out through

the window and away off toward the distant hills. She, too, set me wondering; was she thinking of Son-in-law?

At that moment, however, the pig gave another impatient grunt which startled Athabasca and caused her to look directly at me . . . I blushed scarlet, then; so did she—but, of course, only out of sympathy.

“Yes, we’ll send her to that finishing school in Toronto,” her mother mused, while Free Trader Spear scratched his head once more, and three house flies lazily sat on the sugar bowl and hummed a vulgar tune.

After dinner Mr. Spear invited me into the trading room to see some of the furs he had secured. Among them were four silver fox skins as well as the black one he had bought from Oo-koo-hoo. They were indeed fine skins.

It was now time for me to take my departure, so I returned to the living room, but found no one there. Presently, however, Mrs. Spear entered, and though she sat down opposite me, she never once looked my way. She seemed agitated about something. Clasp ing her fingers together, she twirled her thumbs about one another, then she twirled them back the other way; later she took to tapping her moccasined toe upon the bare floor. I wondered what was coming. I couldn’t make it out. For all the while she was looking at a certain crack in the floor. Once more she renewed the twirling action of her thumbs, and even increased the action of her toe upon the floor.

What did it all mean? Had I done anything to displease her? No; I could think of nothing of the sort, so I felt a little easier. Suddenly, however, she glanced up and, looking straight at me, began:

“Mr. Heming . . . we have only one child . . . and we love her dearly . . .”

But the pause that followed was so long drawn out that I began to lose interest, especially as the flies were once more



humming the same old tune. A little later, however, I was almost startled when Mrs. Spear exclaimed:

"But I'll lend you a photograph of Athabasca for six weeks!"

Thereupon Mrs. Spear left her chair and going upstairs presently returned with a photograph wrapped in a silk handkerchief; and as at that very moment the Free Trader and his daughter entered the room, I, without comment, slipped the photograph into my inside pocket, and wished them all good-bye; though they insisted upon walking down to the landing to wave me farewell on my way to Fort Consolation.

#### MUSTERING THE FUR BRIGADE

Next morning, soon after dawn, the church bells were ringing and everyone was up and astir; and presently all were on their way to one or another of the little log chapels on the hill; where, a little later, they saw the stalwart men of the Fur Brigade kneeling before the altar as they partook of the holy sacrament before starting upon their voyage to the frontier of civilization.

Strange, isn't it, that the writers of northern novels never depict a scene like that? Probably because they have never been inside a northern church.

Next, breakfasts were hurriedly eaten, then the voyageurs assembled upon the beach placed those big, beautifully formed, six-fathom canoes upon the water, and paddled them to the landing. Then Chief Factor Thompson and Factor Mackenzie joined the throng; and that veteran voyageur, Oo-koo-hoo, who was to command the Fur Brigade, touched his hat and conversed with the officers. A few moments later the old guide waved his swarthy men into line. From them he chose the bowmen, calling each by name, and motioning them to rank beside him; then, in turn, each Bowman selected a man for his

crew; until, for each of the eight canoes, eight men were chosen. Then work began.

Some went off with tump-line in hand to the warehouse, ascended the massive stairs, and entered the fur loft. Tiers of empty shelves circled the room, where the furs were stored during the winter; but upon the floor were stacked packs of valuable pelts—the harvest of the fur trade. The old-fashioned scales, the collapsible mould, and the giant fur press told of the work that had been done. Every pack weighed eighty pounds. Loading up, they rapidly carried the fur to the landing. In the storeroom the voyageurs gathered up the “tripping” kit of paddles, tents, axes, tarpaulins, sponges; and a box for each crew containing frying-pans, tea pails, tin plates, and tea-dishes. In the trading room the crews were supplied with provisions of flour, pork, and tea, at the rate of three pounds a day for each man. They were also given tobacco. Most of the voyageurs received “advances” from the clerk in the way of clothing, knives, pipes, and things deemed essential for the voyage. Birch bark, spruce roots, and gum were supplied for repairing the canoes.

All was now in readiness. The loading of freight began, and when each canoe had received its allotted cargo the voyageurs indulged in much handshaking with their friends, a little quiet talking and affectionate kissing with their families and sweet-hearts. Then, paddle in hand, they boarded their canoes and took their places.

In manning a six-fathom canoe the bowman is always the most important; the steersman comes next in rank, while the others are called “midmen.”

#### DEPARTURE OF THE FUR BRIGADE

Factor Mackenzie and his senior officer, sitting in the guide's or chief voyageur's canoe, which, of course, was Oo-koo-

hoo's, gave the word; and all together the paddle blades dipped, the water swirled, and on the gunwales the paddle handles thudded as the canoes heaved away.

The going and coming of the Fur Brigade was the one great event of the year to those nomadic people who stood watching and waving to the fast-vanishing flotilla. Were they not bidding farewell to fathers, husbands, brothers, sons, or lovers, chosen as the best men from their village? Had they not lent a hand in the winning of the treasure that was floating away? If only the pelts in those packs could speak, what tales they would unfold!

As I looked back the animated picture of the little settlement wherein we figured but a moment before gradually faded into distance. The wild-looking assembly was blotted from the shore. But still above the rapidly dwindling buildings waved the flag of the oldest chartered trading association in the world—the Hudson's Bay Company.

Between eleven and twelve o'clock the brigade went ashore for a "snack." The canoes were snubbed to overhanging trees, and upon a rocky flat the fires burned. Hurriedly drinking the hot tea, the men seized pieces of frying pork and, placing them upon their broken bannock, ravenously devoured both as they returned to the canoes. No time was lost. Away we went again. Then the brigade would paddle incessantly for about two hours; then they would "spell", and paddles were laid aside "one smoke." As the way slackened the steersmen bunched the canoes. The soft, rich voices of the crews blended as they quietly chatted and joked and laughed together.

Later, a stern wind came along. Nearing an island, some of the men went ashore and cut a mast and sprit-sail boom for each canoe. They lashed the masts to the thwarts with tump-lines, and rigged the tarpaulins, used to cover the packs, into sails. Again the paddles were shipped, save those of the steersmen; and the crews lounged about, either smoking or drowsing.



The men were weary. Last night they had danced both hard and long, with dusky maids—as all true voyageurs do on the eve of their departure. To voyageurs stern winds are blessings. Mile after mile the wild flotilla swept along. Sunshine danced upon the rippling waves that gurgled and lapped as the bows overreached them. Rugged islands of moss-covered rock and evergreen trees rose on every side. The wind favoured us for about five miles, then shifted. Reluctantly the sails were let down, and masts and booms tossed overboard. At four o'clock the brigade landed on a pretty island, and a hurried afternoon tea was taken; after which we again paddled on, and at sundown halted to pitch camp for the night.

#### CAMP OF THE FUR BRIGADE

The canoes—held off shore so as not to damage them by touching the beach—were unloaded by men wading in the water. The fur packs were neatly piled and covered with tarpaulins. Then the canoes were lifted off the water, and carried ashore, and turned upside-down for the night. Tents were erected and campfires lit. Upon a thick carpet of evergreen brush the blankets were spread in the tents. The tired men sat in the smoke at the fires and ate their suppers round which black flies and mosquitoes hovered.

Canadian voyageurs, being well used to both fasting and feasting, display great appetites when savoury food is plentiful, and though I have seen much feasting and heard astonishing tales of great eating, I feel I cannot do better than quote the following, as told by Charles Mair, one of the co-authors of that reliable book “Through the Mackenzie Basin”:

“I have already hinted at those masterpieces of voracity for which the region is renowned; yet the undoubted facts related around our campfires, and otherwise, a few of which follow, almost beggar belief. Mr. Young, of our party, an old Hud-

son's Bay officer, knew of sixteen trackers who, in a few days, consumed eight bears, two moose, two bags of pemmican, two sacks of flour, and three sacks of potatoes. Bishop Grouard vouched for four men eating a reindeer at a sitting. Our friend, Mr. d'Eschambault, once gave Oskinnegu,—'The Young Man'—six pounds of pemmican. He ate it all at a meal, washing it down with a gallon of tea, and then complained that he had not had enough. Sir George Simpson states that at Athabasca Lake, in 1820, he was one of a party of twelve who ate twenty-two geese and three ducks at a single meal. But, as he says, they had been three whole days without food. The Saskatchewan folk, however, known of old as the Gens de Blaireaux—'The People of the Badger Holes'—were not behind their congeners. That man of weight and might, our old friend Chief Factor Belanger, once served out to thirteen men a sack of pemmican weighing ninety pounds. It was enough for three days; but there and then they sat down and consumed it all at a single meal, not, it must be added, without some subsequent and just pangs of indigestion. Mr. B., having occasion to pass the place of eating, and finding the sack of pemmican, as he supposed, in his path, gave it a kick; but, to his amazement, it bounded aloft several feet, and then lit. It was empty! When it is remembered that in the old buffalo days the daily ration per head at the Company's prairie posts was eight pounds of fresh meat, which was all eaten, its equivalent being two pounds of pemmican, the enormity of this Gargantuan feast may be imagined. But we ourselves were not bad hands at the trencher. In fact, we were always hungry. So I do not reproduce the foregoing facts as a reproach, but rather as a meagre tribute to the prowess of the great of old—the men of unbounded stomach!"

And yet, strange as it may seem, fat men are seldom seen in the northern wilderness. That is something movie directors should remember.

Pemmican, though little used nowadays, was formerly the mainstay of the voyageurs. It was made of the flesh of buffalo, musk-ox, moose, caribou, wapiti, beaver, rabbit, or ptarmigan; and for ordinary use was composed of 66 per cent. of dried meat pounded fine to 34 per cent. of hard fat boiled and strained. A finer quality of pemmican for officers or travellers was composed of 60 per cent. of dried meat pounded extra fine and sifted; 33 per cent. of grease taken from marrow bones boiled and strained; 5 per cent. of dried Saskatoon berries; 2 per cent. of dried choke cherries, and sugar according to taste. The pounded meat was placed in a large wooden trough and, being spread out, hot grease was poured over it and then stirred until thoroughly mixed with the meat. Then, after first letting it cool somewhat, the whole was packed into leather bags, and, with the aid of wooden mallets, driven down into a solid mass, when the bags were sewn up and flattened out and left to cool; during the cooling precaution was taken to turn the bags every five minutes to prevent the grease settling too much to one side. Pemmican was packed 50, 80, or 100 lb. in a bag—according to the difficulty of transporting it through the country in which it was to be used. The best pemmican was made from buffalo meat, and 2 lb. of buffalo pemmican was considered equal to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  lb. of moose or 3 lb. of caribou pemmican.

Later, a cool sunset breeze from over the water blew the little tormentors away, and then it was that those swarthy men enjoyed their rest. After supper some made bannock batter in the mouths of flour-sacks, adding water, salt, and baking powder. This they worked into balls and spread out in sizzling pans arranged obliquely before the fire with a bed of coals at the back of each. It was an enlivening scene. Great roaring fires sent glowing sparks high into the still night air, lighting up the trees with their intense glare, and casting weird shadows upon the surrounding tents and bushes. Picturesque, wild-looking men laughed, talked, and gesticulated at one another. A few



with *capotes* off were sitting close to the fires, and flipping into the air the browning flap-jacks that were to be eaten the following day. Others, with hoods over their heads, lolled back from the fire smoking their pipes—and by the way, novelists and movie directors and actors should know that the natives of the northern wilderness, both white and red, do not smoke cigarettes; they smoke pipes and nothing else. Some held their moccasins before the fire to dry, or arranged their blankets for turning in. Others slipped away under cover of darkness to rub pork rinds on the bottom of their canoes, for there was much rivalry as to the speed of the crews. Still more beautiful grows the scene, when the June moon rises above the trees and tips with flickering light the running waves.

Sauntering from one crew's fire to another, I listened for a while to the talking and laughing of the voyageurs, but hearing no thrilling tales or even a humorous story by that noted romancer Old Billy Brass, I went over and sat down at the officers' fire, where Chief Factor Thompson was discussing old days and ways with his brother trader.

#### THE LONGEST BRIGADE ROUTES

After a little while I asked:

"What was the longest route of the old-time canoe and boat brigades?"

"There were several very long ones," replied Mr. Thompson, "for instance, the one from Montreal to Vancouver, a distance of about three thousand miles; also the one from York Factory on Hudson Bay to the Queen Charlotte Islands, and another from York Factory to the Mackenzie River posts. Some of the portages on the main highway of canoe travel were rather long, for instance, the one at Portage La Loche was twelve miles in length and over it everything had to be carried on man back.

"In winter time, travel was by way of snowshoes, dog-sled,

or jumper. A jumper is a low, short, strong sleigh set upon heavy wooden runners and hauled by ox, horse, men, or dogs. The freight load per dog—as you know—is a hundred pounds; per man, one to two hundred pounds; per horse, four to six hundred pounds; and per ox, five to seven hundred pounds. In summer there were the canoe, York boat, sturgeon-head scow, and Red River cart brigades. A six-fathom canoe carries from twenty to thirty packages; a York boat, seventy-five packages; a Sturgeon-head scow, one hundred packages; and a Red River cart, six hundred pounds. The carts were made entirely of wood and leather and were hauled by horse or ox. With every brigade went the wife of one of the voyageurs to attend to the mending of the voyageurs' clothing and to look after the comfort of the officer in charge. But the voyageurs always had to do their own cooking and washing.

“In the old days, too, much of their food had to be procured from the country through which they travelled and therefore they relied upon buffalo, moose, wapiti, deer, bear, beaver, rabbit, fish, and water-fowl to keep them in plenty.”

Then for a while the Factors sat smoking in silence. The moon had mounted higher and was now out of sight behind the tops of the neighbouring trees, but its reflection was brilliantly rippled upon the water. At one of the fires a French half-breed was singing in a rich barytone one of the old *chansons* that were so much in vogue among the voyageurs of by-gone days—*À la Claire Fontaine*. After an encore, silence again held sway, until around another fire hearty laughter began to play.

“The boys over there must be yarning again,” remarked, the Chief Factor, as he pointed with his pipe, “let's go over, and listen awhile.”

#### BILLY BRASS TELLS ANOTHER STORY

It was Oo-koo-hoo's fire and among his men was seated that ever-welcome member of another crew—Old Billy Brass.

The departure of the Fur Brigade was the one great event of the year. Inmanning six-fathom canoes the bounnen are always the most important; the steersmen coming next in rank, while the others are called "midmen." The brigade would paddle incessantly for about two hours; then they would "spell," and paddles were laid aside "one side." The soft, rich voices of the crews blended as they quietly chatted and joked and

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Evidently he had just finished telling one of his mirth-provoking stories, as the men were good-naturedly questioning him about it; for, as we sat down, he continued:

"Yes, sir, it's true; fire attraks 'em. Why, I've knowed 'em come from miles round when they caught a glimpse of it, an' as long as there's danger o' white bears bein' round you'll never again find Old Billy Brass tryin' to sleep beside a big fire. No, sir, not even if His Royal Highness the Commissioner or His Lordship the Bishop gives the word."

Then he sat there slowly drawing upon his pipe with apparently no intention of adding a single word to what he had already said. Lest something interesting should be lost, I ventured:

"Was it the Bishop or the Commissioner that made the trouble?"

"No, sir, neither; 'twas the Archdeacon," replied the old man as he withdrew his pipe and rubbed his smarting eyes clear of the smoke from the blazing logs. Taking a few short draws at the tobacco, he continued:

"There was three of us, me an' Archdeacon Lofty an' Captain Hawser, who was commandin' one of the Company's boats that was a-goin' to winter in Hudson Bay. It happened in September. The three of us was hoofin' it along the great barren shore o' the bay. In some places the shore was that flat that every time the tide came in she flooded 'bout all the country we could see, an' we had a devil of a time tryin' to keep clear o' the mud. We had a few dogs along to help pack our beddin', but, nevertheless, it was hard work; for we was carryin' most of our outfit on our backs.

"One evenin' just before sundown we stumbled upon a lot o' driftwood scattered all about the flats. As so much wood was lyin' around handy, we decided to spend the night on a little knoll that rose above high-water mark. For the last few days we had seen so little wood that any of our fires could

'a' been built in a hat. But that night the sight o' so much wood fairly set the Archdeacon crazy with delight, an' nothin' would do but we must have a great roarin' fire to sleep by. I would have enjoyed a good warmin' as well as any one, but I was mighty leary about havin' a big fire. So I cautioned the Archdeacon not to use much wood as there was likely to be bears about, an' that no matter how far off they was, if they saw that fire they would make for it—even if they was five or six miles out on the ice floes. He wouldn't listen to me. The Captain backed him up, an' they both set to an' built a fire as big as a tepee.

"We was pretty well tuckered out from the day's walkin'. So after supper we dried our moccasins an' was about to turn in early when—lo an' behold!—the Archdeacon got up an' piled more wood upon the fire. That made me mad; for unless he was huntin' for trouble he couldn't 'a' done a thing more foolish, an' I says somethin' to that effect. He comes back at me as though I was afraid o' me own shadder, an' says: 'Billy Brass, I'm s'prised that a man like you doesn't put more faith in prayin' an' trustin' hisself in the hands o' the Almighty.'

"I was so hot over the foolishness of havin' such a big fire that I ups an' says:

"That may be all right for you, sir, but I prefer to use my wits first, an' trust in Providence afterwards.'

"Nothin' more was said, an' we all turns in. I didn't like the idea of every one goin' to sleep with a fire so big that it was showin' itself for miles aroun', so I kep' myself awake. I wasn't exactly thinkin' that somethin' really serious was goin' to happen, but I was just wishin' it would, just to teach the Archdeacon a lesson. As time went on I must 'a' done a little dozin'; for when I looks up at the Dipper again, I learns from its angle with the North Star that it was already after midnight. An'—would you believe it?—that fire was still



blazin' away nearly as big as ever. The heat seemed to make me drowsy, for I began to doze once more. All at once I heard the dogs blowin' so hard——"

"Blowing?"

"Yes, that's right; they were blowin'; for *geddies* don't bark like other dogs when they're frightened. Well, as I was sayin', they were blowin' so hard that my hair nearly stood on end. Like a shot I throws off me blanket an' jumps to me feet, for I knowed what was comin'. The Captain an' the Archdeacon heard them, too, an' we all grabbed at once for the only gun, a single-barrelled muzzle-loader.

"As ill luck would have it, the Archdeacon was nearest to that gun an' grabbed it, an' by the time we was straightened up we sees a great big white bear rushin' at us. Quick as thought the Archdeacon points the gun at the bear an' pulls the trigger, but the hammer only snaps upon the bare nipple; for the cap had tumbled off in the scramble. There was no time for re-cappin'; so, bein' the nearest to the chargin' bear, the Archdeacon just drops the old gun an' runs for dear life around that fire with me an' the Captin followin' close behind him.

"When I seen the way the Archdeacon an' the Captin went a sailin' round that fire, it fairly took me breath away; for somehow I never had any idea that them two old cripples had so much speed left in 'em. An' you can bet it kep' me unusually busy bringin' up the rear; an', anyway, the feelin' that the bear was for ever snappin' at me coat-tails kep' me from takin' things too easy.

"Well, we tore round an' round an' round that fire so dang many times that we was not only rapidly losin' our wind but we was beginnin' to get dizzy into the bargain. All the time we could hear the great beast thunderin' after us, yet we daren't slacken our pace; no, sir, not even enough to take a single glance behind just to see which was gainin'. It was a sure

case of life or death, but principally death; an' you can depend on it we wasn't takin' any chances.

"Me an' the Captin was crowdin' so close upon the Archdeacon's heels that in his terror lest we should pass him by he ups an' sets the pace at such a tremendous speed that the whole three of us actually catches up to the bear . . . without the brute's knowin' it. If it hadn't been for the Archdeacon steppin' on the sole of the bear's upturned left hind foot as the hungry beast was gallopin' round the fire . . . we'd have been runnin' a good deal longer.

"Well, sir, if you had just seen how foolish that bear looked when he discovered that we was chasin' him instead of him chasin' us, you'd have died laughin'. Why, he was the most bewildered an' crest-fallen animal I ever did see. But he soon regained his wits an'—evidently calculatin' that his only salvation layed in his overhaulin' us—lit out at a saprisin' gait in a grand effort to leave us far enough behind for him to catch up to us. But it didn't work; for by that time we had all got our second wind an' he soon realized that we was determined not to be overhauled from the rear. So he set to ponderin' what was really the best thing for him to do; an' then he did it.

"You must understand that we was so close upon his heels that there wasn't room for him to stop an' turn around without us all fallin' on top of him. So what do you think the cunnin' brute did? Why, he just hauled off an' kicked out behind with his right hind foot, an' hit the Archdeacon a smashin' blow square on his stomach, an' knocked him bang against the Captin an' the Captin against me, an' me against the dogs; an' we all went down in a heap beside the fire.

"Well, sir, that old brute had put so much glad an' earnest energy into its kick that it knocked the wind plum out of every one of us, an' for the next few seconds there was a mess of arms an' legs an' tails frantically tryin' to disentangle themselves.

But, as good luck would have it, I went down upon the gun. As I rose to my feet, I slipped a cap on the nipple just as the bear comes chargin' around the fire facing us. I ups an' lets him have it full in the mouth. The shot nearly stunned him. While he was clawin' the pain in his face I had time to re-load, an' lets him have it behind the ear, an' he drops dead without a whimper.

"Then—would you believe it?—the Archdeacon goes up to the shaggy carcass, puts his foot on the bear's head, an' stands there lookin' for all the world like British Columbia discoverin' America, an' says:

"'There, now, Billy Brass, I hope you have learned a lesson. Next time you will know where to place your trust.'

"Well, sir, the way he was lettin' on that he had saved the whole outfit made me mad. So I ups an' says:

"'Yes, sir, an' if I hadn't put me trust in me gun, there would have been another Archdeacon in heaven.'"

#### THE TRUTH ABOUT WOODSMEN

It was now growing late. For a while the smiling Indians, half-breeds, and white men smoked in silence; then one after another, each knocked the ashes from his pipe, arose, stretched himself, and sauntered off to his bed, whether in a tent, under a canoe, or in the open. Walking down to the water's edge I watched the moonlight for a while, then passsd quietly from one smouldering fire to another. Some of the men were still talking together in low tones so as not to disturb those who were already seeking slumber, while others were arranging their bedding; and still others were devoutly kneeling in prayer to The Master of Life.

Thus during the four seasons of the year I had lived with and observed the men of the northern wilderness; and not only had I learned to like and respect them, but to admire their gene-



rosity and honesty, their simplicity and skill, their gentleness and prowess; and, above all, to honour their spiritual attitude toward this world and the next. How different they were from the city dwellers' conception of them! But still you may want further proof. You may want first-hand knowledge of those northern men. You may want to study their minds and to look into their hearts. Then may I ask you to read the following letter, written a few years ago by an old Canadian woodsman—Mr. A. B. Carleton—who was born and bred in the northern wilderness. Then you may become better acquainted with at least one of the men I have been trying to picture to you.

"I was born in the heart of the northern forest, and in my wanderings my steps have ever gone most willingly back toward the pine-covered hills and the grassy glades that slope down to cool, deep waters. The wanderlust has carried me far, but the lakes and waterfalls, the bluffs and the bays of the great northern No-Man's Land are my home, and with *Mukwa* the bear, *Mah-en-gin* the wolf, *Wash-gish* the red deer, and *Ah-Meek* the beaver, I have much consorted and have found their company quite to my liking.

"But the fates have so dealt with me that for two years I have not been able to see the smile of Springtime breaking forth upon the rugged face of my northern No-Man's Land. I have had glimpses of it, merely, among crowded houses, out of hospital windows. Still, my mind is native to the forest, and my thoughts and fancies, breaking captivity, go back, like the free wild things they are, on bright days of springtime to the wild land where the change of season means what it never can mean in the town.

"What does Spring mean to you town folk, anyway? I will tell you. It means lighter clothing, dust instead of sleet, the transfer of your patronage from fuel man to ice man, a few days of slushy streets and baseball instead of hockey.

“What does it mean to the man of the woods? That I will try to tell you. It means that the deep snow which has mantled hill and valley for five months has melted into brooks and rivulets which are plunging and splashing away to find the ocean from whence they came. It means that the thick ice which throughout the long winter has imprisoned the waters of the lakes, is now broken, and the waves, incited by the south wind, are wreaking vengeance by beating it upon the rocks of the northern shore, until, subdued and melted, it returns to be a mere part of the waves again. Instead of the hungry winter howl of the wolf or the whining snarl of the sneaking lynx the air is now filled with happier sounds: ducks are quacking; geese are honking; waveys are cackling as they fly northward; squirrels among the spruce trees chatter noisily; on sandy ridges woodchucks whistle excitedly; back deep in the birch thicket partridges are drumming, and all the woodland is musical with the song of birds.

“The trees, through whose bare branches the wind all winter has whistled and shrieked, are now sending forth leaves of tender green and the voice of the wind caressing them is softened to a tone as musical as the song of birds. Flowers are springing up, not in the rigid rows or precise squares of a mechanically inclined horticulturist, but surprising one by elbowing themselves out of the narrowest crevices, or peeping bashfully out from behind fallen trees, or clinging almost upside down to the side of an overhanging cliff.

“My camp on Rainy Lake faces the south and in front is a little stunted black ash tree, so dwarfed, gnarled, twisted, and homely that it is almost pretty. I refrained from cutting it down because of its attractive deformity. In the springtime, a few years ago, a pair of robins chose it as their nesting place. One bright Sunday morning, as the nest was in course of construction, I was sitting in my doorway watching the pair. The brisk little husband was hurrying toward the nest with a

bit of moss; but the mild sun, the crisp air, the sweet breathing earth, the gently whispering trees seemed to make him so very happy he could not but tell of it. Alighting on a twig he dropped the moss, opened his beak, and poured forth in song the joy his little body could no longer contain. That is the joy of a northern No-Man's Land in the month of May.

"We are so happy in our woodland home that we wish everyone might share it with us. But perhaps some would not enjoy what we enjoy, or see what we see, and some are prevented from coming by the duties of other callings, and each must follow the pathway his feet are most fitted to tread. For myself, I only want my little log cabin with the wild vines climbing over its walls and clinging to the mud-chinked crevices, where I can hear the song of wild birds mingled with the sleepy hum of bees moving from blossom to blossom about the doorway; where I can see the timid red deer, as, peeping out of the brush, it hesitates between the fear of man and the temptation of the white clover growing in front of my home, and where I can watch the endless procession of waves following each other up the bay. Give me the necessity of working for my daily bread so that I will not feel as though I were a useless cumberance upon the earth; allow me an opportunity now and then of doing a kindly act, even if it be no more than restoring to the shelter of its mother's breast a fledgling that has fallen from its nest in a tree top. If I may have these I will be happy, and happier still if I could know that when the time comes for me to travel the trail, the sands of which show no imprint of returning footsteps, that I might be put to rest on the southern slope of the ridge beside my camp, where the sunshine chases the shadows around the birch tree, where the murmur of the waves comes in rhythm to the robin's song, and where the red deer play on moonlight nights. Neither will I fear the snows of winter that come drifting over the bay, driven by the



wind that whines through the naked tree tops, nor the howl of the hungry wolf, for what had no terror for me in life need not have afterward. And if the lessons that I learned at my mother's knee be true; if there be that within me that lives on, I am sure that it will be happier in its eternal home if it may look back and know that the body which it had tried to guide through its earthly career was having its long rest in the spot it loved best."

Did you ever meet a character like that in northern fiction? No, of course not; how could you? . . . When the books were written by city-dwelling men. Then, too, is not any production of the creative arts—a poem, a story, a play, a painting, or a statue—but a reflection of the composer's soul? So . . . when you read a book filled with inhuman characters, you have taken the measure of the man who wrote it, you have seen a reflection of the author's soul. Furthermore, when people exclaim: "What's the matter with the movies?" The answer is: Nothing . . . save that the screens too often reflect the degenerate souls of the movie directors.

But the Indian—how he has been slandered for centuries! When in reality it is just as Warren, the Historian of the Ojibways, proclaimed: "There was consequently less theft and lying, more devotion to the Great Spirit, more obedience to their parents, and more chastity in man and woman, than exists at the present day, since their baneful intercourse with the white race." And Hearne, the northern traveller, ended a similar contention—more than a hundred years ago—by saying: "It being well known that those who have the least intercourse with white men are by far the happiest."

That night, as I turned in, I had occasion to look through my kit bag, and there I found, wrapped in a silk handkerchief, the photograph—lent to me for six weeks—of the charming Athabasca. Being alone in my tent, I carefully unfolded its wrapper, and drawing the candle a little nearer, I gazed

at her beautiful face. Again I wondered about Son-in-law. . . .

#### A RACE FOR THE PORTAGE

At three o'clock next morning the camp was astir. In the half light of early day, and while breakfast was being prepared, the men "gummed" afresh the big canoes. Whittling handles to dry pinesticks, they split the butts half way down, and placed that end in the fire. After a little burning, the stick opened like a fork; and, placing it over the broken seam, the voyageur blew upon the crotch, thus melting the hardened "gum"; then, spitting upon his palm, he rounded it off and smoothed it down. By the time breakfast was ready the tents were again stowed away in the canoes along with the valuable cargoes of furs.

Paddling up the mist-enshrouded river the canoes rounded a bend. There the eddying of muddy water told that a moose had just left a water-lily bed. The leaves of the forest hid his fleeing form; but on the soft bank the water slowly trickled into his deep hoof-prints, so late was his departure. The tracks of bear and deer continuously marked the shores, for the woods were full of game. From the rushes startled ducks rose up and whirled away. How varied was the scenery. Island-dotted lakes, timber-covered mountains, winding streams and marshy places; bold rocky gorges and mighty cataracts; dense forests of spruce, tamarack, poplar, birch, and pine—a region well worthy to be the home of either Nimrod or Diana.

Later in the day, when all the canoes were ranged side by side, their gracefully curved bows came in line; dip, swirl, thud; dip, swirl, thud, sounded all the paddles together. The time was faultless. Then it was that the picturesque brigade appeared in wild perfection. Nearing a portage, spontaneously a race began for the best landing place. Like contending

chargers, forward they bounded at every stroke. Vigorously the voyageurs plied their paddles. Stiffening their arms and curving their backs, they bent the blades. Every muscle was strained. The sharp bows cleaved the lumpy water, sending it gurgling to the paddles that slashed it, and whirled it aside. On they went. Now Oo-koo-hoo's canoe was gaining. As that brightly painted craft gradually forged ahead, its swiftly running wake crept steadily along the sides of the other canoes. Presently the wavelets were sounding "whiff, whiff, whiff," as the white bows crushed them down. Then at last his canoe broke free and lunged away, leaving all the brigade to follow in its broadening trail. The pace was too exhausting; the canoes strung out; but still the narrow blades slashed away, for the portage was at hand. With dangerous speed the first canoe rushed abreast of the landing, and just as one expected disaster the bowman gave the word. Instantly the crew, with their utmost strength, backed water. As the canoe came to a standstill the voyageurs rolled their paddle-handles along the gunwales, twirling the dripping blades and enveloping the canoe in a veil of whirling spray. Then, jumping into the shallow water, they lined up and quickly passed the packs ashore. The moment the cargo was transferred to the bank, the crew lifted the great canoe off the water and turned it bottom up, while four of them placed their heads beneath and rested the gunwales upon their *capote*-bepadded shoulders. As they carried it off, one was reminded of some immense antediluvian reptile crawling slowly over the portage trail.

There was now much excitement. Other crews had arrived, and were rapidly unloading. As the landing was over-crowded the portaging began. Each man tied the thin, tapering ends of his tump-line—a fifteen-foot leather strap with a broad centre—about a pack, swung it upon his back, and, bending forward, rested its broad loop over his head. Upon the first his companion placed two more packs; then, stooping beneath the



weight of 240 pounds, the packers at a jog-trot set off uphill and down, over rugged rocks and fallen timber, through fern-covered marsh and dense underbrush. Coming to an opening in the wood at the far end of the portage, they quickly tossed their burdens aside, and back again they ran. Nowhere could one see more willing workers. You heard no swearing or grumbling about the exceedingly hard task before them. On the contrary, every man vied with the rest as to which could carry the greatest load and most swiftly cross the portage. Rivalry sped the work along. Shirts and trousers reeked with perspiration. The voyageurs puffed and panted as they went by, and no wonder—the portage was three quarters of a mile in length.

Then away we went again, and up, up, up, we mounted day by day, toward the height-of-land, where a long portage over low-lying marshy ground brought us to the place where our descent began; then for days we ran with the current until it entered a larger river, and soon we found that endless rapids interrupted our work, and down many of them the canoes were run. The Hudson's Bay Company, however, never allows its men to shoot rapids with fur-laden canoes; so it was on that wild stretch of our trip that the skill of the voyageur was tested most.

#### FIGHTING WITH DEATH

At the head of one of the great rapids Oo-koo-hoo, seeing that I mated well with one of his crew, invited me to take a paddle and help them through. Tossing in an extra paddle for each canoeman we stepped aboard, and with a gentle shove the current caught the light canoe and carried us out to mid-stream. Long before we sighted white water the roar of the cataract was humming in our ears. We midmen sat upon dunnage sacks and braced our moccasined feet against the ribbing. Presently the bowman stood up and scanned

the river. Dark, ominous water raced ahead for a hundred yards then disappeared, leaving nothing but a great surging mass of white that leaped high and dropped out of sight in the apparently forsaken river-bed. Then the steersman stood up, too, and Indian words passed between them. Every moment we were gaining impetus, and always heading for the highest crest of foam. Waiting for the word to paddle was even worse than waiting for the starter's gun in a sculling race. At last it came, just as we were twenty-five yards from the end of dark water. With a wild shout from the bowman we drove our paddles home. The great canoe trembled a little at first, as our work was somewhat ragged, but a moment later we settled into an even stroke and swept buoyantly among the tossing billows. Now before us ran a strange wild river of seething white, lashing among great, gray-capped, dark greenish boulders that blocked the way. High rocky banks standing close together squeezed the mighty river into a tumult of fury.

Swiftly we glide down the racing torrent and plunge through the boiling waters. Sharp rocks rear above the flying spray while others are barely covered by the foaming flood. It is dangerous work. We midmen paddle hard to force the canoe ahead of the current. The steersman in bow and stern ply and bend their great seven-foot paddles. The bowman with eyes alert keenly watches the whirling waters and signs of hidden rocks below. The roar of seething waters drowns the bowman's orders. The steersman closely watches and follows every move his companion makes. Down we go, riding upon the very back of the river; for here the water forms a great ridge, rising four or five feet above the water-line on either shore. To swerve to either side means sure destruction. With terrific speed we reach the brink of a violent descent. For a moment the canoe pauses, steadies herself, then dips her head as the stern upheaves, and down we plunge among more rocks than ever. Right in our path the

angry stream is waging battle with a hoary boulder that disputes the way. With all its might and fury the frantic river hisses and roars and lashes it. Yet it never moves—it only frowns destruction upon all that dares approach it.

How the bowman is working! See his paddle bend! With lightning movements he jabs his great paddle deep into the water and close under the left side of the bow; then with a mighty heave he lifts her head around. The great canoe swings as though upon a pivot; for is not the steersman doing exactly the very opposite at this precise moment? We sheer off. But the next instant the paddles are working on the opposite sides, for the bowman sees signs of a water-covered rock not three yards from the very bow. With a wild lunge he strives to lift the bow around; but the paddle snaps like a rotten twig. Instantly he grabs for another, and a grating sound runs the length of the heaving bottom. The next moment he is working the new paddle. A little water is coming in but she is running true. The rocks now grow fewer, but still there is another pitch ahead. Again the bow dips as we rush down the incline. Spray rises in clouds that drench us to the skin as we plunge through the “great swell” and then shoot out among a multitude of tumbling billows that threaten to engulf us. The canoe rides upon the backs of the “white horses” and we rise and fall, rise and fall, as they fight beneath us. At last we leave their wild arena, and, entering calmer water, paddle away to the end of the portage trail.

One morning, soon after sunrise, the brigade came to the end of its journey as it rounded a point and headed for a smoking steamboat that rested upon a shimmering lake; and so entirely did the rising mist envelop the craft that it suggested the silhouette of a distant mountain in volcanic eruption. Then the canoes, each in turn, lay alongside the steamer; the fur packs were loaded aboard, and thence by steamboat and rail-



road they continued their journey to Montreal; where together with the "returns" from many another of the Hudson's Bay Company's thirty-four districts, they were reshipped in ocean-going craft for England where eventually they were sold by auction in London.

A hundred years ago as many as ten brigades, each numbering twenty six-fathom canoes, sometimes swept along those northern highways and awoke those wild solitudes with the rollicking songs and laughter of fifteen or sixteen hundred voyageurs; but alas for those wonderfully picturesque days of bygone times! The steamboats and the railroads have driven them away.

In my youth, however, I was fortunate enough to have travelled with the last of those once-famous fur brigades; and also to have learned from personal experience the daily life of the northern woods—the drama of the forests—of which in my still earlier youth I had had so many day-dreams; and now if in describing and depicting it to you I have succeeded in imparting at least a fraction of the pleasure it gave me to witness it, I am well repaid. But perhaps you are wondering about the beautiful Athabasca?

#### ATHABASCA AND SON-IN-LAW

Some years later, while on my second visit to Fort Consolation, I not only found a flourishing town of some four or five thousand inhabitants built on Free Trader Spear's original freehold, but in the handsome brick City Hall—standing in the original stump-lot—I met the old Free Trader himself, now holding office as the Mayor of Spearhead City. Not only had he become wealthy—rumour said he was already a millionaire—but he had taken another man into partnership, for now over his big brick storehouse read a huge sign in golden letters "SPEAR AND . . ." For like all day-dreams—if only

dreamed often enough—the ever-present dream of the Free Trader and his wife had really come true.

It was then that I learned that soon after my departure Prince Charming had come up out of the East, fallen in love with the beautiful Athabasca, become the actual Son-in-law, had been taken into partnership by her father, and together the lucky groom and his blushing bride had moved into their newly built log cabin, furnished with the long-promised bed, table, and chairs, the cooking stove, blankets, crockery, cutlery, and cooking utensils. Round about their simple little home a heifer, a pig, and some ducks and geese stood guard while their beautiful mistress lived happy ever after—at least she did until prosperity inveigled her into a grand new brick mansion; and then, of course, her troubles began, because happiness always prefers a cabin to a castle.

THE END





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